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British-Romanian Relations during the Cold War

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Graduate Program in History

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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BRITISH –ROMANIAN RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR

Thesis format: Monograph

By

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Graduate Program in History

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the Second World War, towards the end of the 1940s, British-Romanian relations were strained, marked by accusations of espionage directed towards Britain's diplomats and requests for recalls. The British Government reacted moderately, acquiescing to recall their diplomats but refusing to concede to the Romanians when it came to their 'flimsy' accusations. Negotiation was preferred to reprisals especially when certain Britons had to be rescued from the Communists' hands.

In one respect Britain was not that indulgent: when money was involved, particularly the assets of oil companies nationalized in 1948. Trade remained a priority for both the British and Romanian governments. After laborious negotiations, a trade agreement was signed in 1960 and the ascendant trend continued into the 1970s when Harold Wilson and Nicolae Ceausescu established a close relationship. Britain's interest in Romania was defined at this juncture as being firstly political, then mercantile and cultural, in order of priority. As far as Romania remained a 'thorn' in the Soviet Union's back, a means to reach the remote Chinese or a mediator between various sides of the world in conflict, politics was priority. Trade remained an issue for both parties. Anglo-Romanian cultural relations however, were almost nonexistent for the duration of this period. Concern for human rights, Helsinki agreements notwithstanding, focused entirely on the predicament of a few persons who wished to marry or to reunite with their family in Britain.

When political interest in Romania declined in the 1980s, due to the regime's eleventh hour attempt to reconnect to the Eastern Bloc, Britain's economic interest still remained. Relations between Britain and Ceausescu's Romania remained strong until the Revolution of 1989 that swept away Ceausescu and the Communist regime.

At the close of the decade, Romania's foreign and domestic policies were fiercely criticized by the Soviet Union's more liberal Communist leader, Gorbachev. Although the "value" of Romanian deviance within the communist camp seemed to be diminishing in importance during the 1980s, Ceausescu's fall was as big a surprise to London as it was to himself. Although Ceausescu's policies of national assertion abroad, and promises, censorship and repression inside, had produced a seemingly a stable state, neither Ceausescu nor London, had grasped that a changing Eastern Europe would challenge even the existence of a complicated balancing act between the West and East which culminated with the disappearance of the Soviet led organizations and the Soviet Bloc. Once renowned for an assertive foreign policy, Romania was again in the spot of world at the end of 1989, this time for having executed its dictator and bloodily ending a regime.

To Professor Neville Thompson

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Acknowledgements

I was fortunate to have met during my studies at the University of Western Ontario wonderful professors. Professor Neville Thompson was a genuine mentor, always encouraging and helpful. The dissertation is dedicated to him. I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Brock Millman, who helped me to clarify my ideas, read every word of my dissertation, often several times, and gave me much needed advice. I have learnt much from Professors J. Rodney Millard, Pierre Claude Reynard and William J. Turkell and received much encouragement from Professor Roger D. Hall.

I am also grateful to Silviu Moldovan from the National Council for Studying the Securitate Files and Stelian Obiziuc from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who guided my research in the files of their institutions.

A number of friends have given me advice and help. I am indebted to Radu Neamtu and Cosmin Florescu who supported me in various occasions during my studies. Neil and Chris Speed offered me their warm hospitality during my stay in London in May 2013. My friends Nicolae Videnie and Mircea Stanescu offered me advice and kindly located various books for me.

Introduction

This dissertation grew out of a paper which I presented in a seminar held by Professor Neville Thomson on British history. After reading my paper my colleagues were interested to find out more about Ceausescu and his foreign policy. My presentation had focused on British-Romanian relations in the mid-Cold War: the sixties and seventies. “How was Ceausescu perceived today”, my colleagues wanted to know. Is he still considered a ruthless dictator or is he praised for his stance during the Czechoslovak crisis when he condemned the Soviet led invasion by the Warsaw Pact countries in which Romania did not take part?

To many people Romania was and still is a remote country whose relations with Britain were not of much interest. To many Romanians, Britain still represents the country of Churchill -- the ‘betrayal who sold us at Yalta’ -- and a country where it is good to go to work, particularly given high currency valuations. The eldest may recall that, in their youth, they had watched on TV the great pomp of Ceausescu’s visit to London and most of them would remember that the Queen took Ceausescu into her carriage. Only some would know that it was the first State visit by a Communist leader to Britain since the War and very few might draw a connection between Ceausescu’s stance of 1968 and his subsequent state visit to Britain of 1978.

In the aftermath of the Second World War Romania was not of much interest for Britain. Churchill ‘never felt’ that Britain’s relations with Romania in the past ‘called for any special sacrifice’ from Britons.¹ Although changing sides on 23 August 1944, Romania was still a former Axis power.

¹ Churchill, *The Second World War*, II, *Their Finest Hour*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1940, p. 208.

At the beginning of the Second World War Romania's leaders adopted a policy of cautious neutrality and King Carol II looked to Britain to help offset the developing hegemony of Germany. In 1939 the Foreign Office conceived a plan by which military assistance could be given to Romania in case of a German attack. This implied an intention to form a bloc of states in Eastern Europe which would be able to provide direct military aid to Romania in case of attack.² Following a request for economic assistance, on 20 March 1939 the Foreign Office announced that it would send a trade mission to Bucharest. The mission arrived at the end of April and had the purpose of granting of five million pounds in credit and the promise to purchase two hundred thousand tons of Romanian wheat from the next harvest.³

In order to gain a free hand against Poland, Hitler made important concessions to the Soviets, including the recognition of Bessarabia as a Russian asset. Following the secret additional protocol to the Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939 signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov, the Soviets invaded Bessarabia and Bukovina. In a Foreign Office memorandum of 5 September 1939 Orme Sargent stated that it was in Britain's 'vital interest' to strengthen Romania.⁴ This remained however just an intention. Romania led by General Ion Antonescu joined the Anti-Comintern Pact and six months later, on 22 June 1941 declared war on the Soviet Union. The Romanians would soon find themselves engaged in war with the Soviets' allies without wanting it. Britain declared war on Romania on 7 December, followed by the United States on 12 December 1941.⁵

² Paul D. Quinlan, *Clash Over Romania. British and American policies toward Romania: 1938-1947*, American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, 1977, p. 42.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

⁵ Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania, 1856-1947 [The Great Powers and Romania, 1856-1947]*, p. 296 and 303-305.

On 23 August 1944 the King Michael arrested Antonescu and announced the unilateral cessation of hostilities with the Soviets. Then, he decided to join the Allies against Germany. Romanians fought against their former allies until the end of the Second World War contributing decisively to shortening the war.

In the aftermath of the war, in the new European split by the Iron Curtain, the British maintained interests in other Eastern countries, but not in Romania. The rise to power of the Communists, supported by the Soviet troops, made the split with Britain more dramatic. The British representatives in Bucharest witnessed how their employees were arrested and tried for treason and their war-time contacts were caught and accused of espionage in favour of 'the Imperialists'. The fact that the Anglo-Americans were the Russians' former allies and the 'spies' had worked for the Allied cause did not count to the Communist regime newly installed in Bucharest. Some of them, sentenced for up to twenty five years, died in Romanian prisons, while others ill, tortured, but surviving to be released, had their health severely shaken, and were prohibited from working as a prolonged punishment which denied them any means of survival.

To the average Romanian the West, Britain included, remained inaccessible for the whole Cold War period. Nevertheless the hope endured that 'salvation' from Communism would come from the English speaking world. One of the most persistent rumours and convictions following the Second World War was that 'the Americans would come!, ultimately.'⁶ The opposition parties' leaders who, during the Second World War had supported the Allied cause, could not believe that the British refused to offer the Romanians minimum support against the recently installed Communist regime. The help they expected was like that offered to Greeks and Turks to fight the Communists. When it was obvious that neither the British nor the Americans would become involve in the

⁶ Bogdan Barbu, *Vin americanii! Prezenta simbolica a Statelor Unite in Romania Razboiului Rece* [The Americans are coming! The symbolic presence of the United States in Romania during the Cold War], Bucharest, Humanitas, 2006.

survival of democracy in Romania, there was another rumour circulating: 'They sold us! They sold us at Yalta!' The very few optimists believed that, due to the isolation of the country and the Eastern Bloc in general, the West could not know what the real situation in Romania was. Western representatives were not only carefully watched but also confined to a perimeter of 50 km around Bucharest and when allowed to visit certain cities, they were accompanied by a Romanian official who produced their itinerary. Western representatives could only trust what the Communists were telling them since they had no way of knowing what was going on beyond 'the red carpet' set up for them. Moreover, Romanian officials were truly skilful in presenting the bright side of the country to the carefully selected visitors.

Disappointment was profound when the news that Ceausescu had been offered a state visit to Britain was published in the press. It was like a second betrayal. While the regime hid its atrocious nature and sequestered dissidents in psychiatric hospitals the British were inviting the dictator to the Queen's House! Letters sent by Romanian immigrants and knowledgeable Britons complaining about the harsh rule of Ceausescu received a stereotyped, and unfriendly response.

The official response followed from the assessment of post-war British diplomats. None of them believed that Ceausescu was a democrat or a liberal leader. They were aware that he was in fact a complete and sophisticated dictator who totally controlled the Communist Party which, in turn, controlled the country. However, Britain had developed a renewed interest in establishing close relations with Romania, even though it was a Communist state. In the list of British interests, politics and trade were predominant. Cultural relations were almost nonexistent, while human rights concern focused entirely on the predicament of a few persons who wished to marry, or to reunite with families in the United Kingdom.

When political interest in Romania declined in the 1980s, due to the regime's eleventh hour attempt to reconnect to the Eastern Bloc, Britain's economic interest still remained. Relations between Britain and Ceausescu's Romania remained strong until the Revolution of 1989 that swept away Ceausescu and the Communist regime.

My dissertation is based mainly on recently published and unpublished documents available in the National Archives in London and the National Archives in Bucharest, the Romanian Diplomatic Archives and the Council for Studying the Securitate Archives. Certain documents confirm what is already known about British and Romanian foreign policies in the 1970s while others contain new information on the evolution of the bilateral relations in the 1950s and 1960s.

Outside the archives, very little has been published in English concerning Western relations with Cold War Romania. Most of the literature is Romanian and recent. A few memoirs and diaries belonging to former Western representatives to Bucharest have been published, such as that of Burton Berry, the American Political Representative to Romania between 1944 and 1947, offering new perspectives to the complex period of transition to the establishment of the Communist regime.⁷ C.V.R. Schuyler's diary, the head of the American Military Mission in Romania, has also been translated and published. Much useful information concerning the decisive three years during which the Communists supported by the Soviet troops succeeded in taking the power is provided.⁸

The memoirs of former detainees who worked for the British and the Americans and were condemned for espionage by the Romanian Communist regime are now

⁷ Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, Iasi, The Centre for Romanian Studies; Oxford; Portland, 2000.

⁸ C.V.R. Schuyler, *Misiune Dificila. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946) [Difficult Mission. Diary (28 January 1945-20 September 1946)]*, Bucharest, 1997.

accessible to a Romanian audience.⁹ These are fascinating accounts of Romanians condemned for real or imaginary offenses against the regime. The myth of the Americans coming to rescue the people from Communist domination persisted for several years after the Second World War. It was analysed recently by Bogdan Barbu in his book *Vin americanii! Prezenta simbolica a Statelor Unite in Romania Razboiului Rece* [*The Americans are coming! The symbolic presence of the United States in Romania during the Cold War*], published in 2006.¹⁰ The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives edited *Arhivele Securitatii* [*The Securitate Archives*], a series published in 2008 attesting to the vigilant surveillance of any ‘subversive’ organization.¹¹ A book by Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu and Ion Patroiu focusing on *England and Romania between 1939 and 1947* published in 1992, still remains an important reference for bilateral relations during and in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹²

Some few historians such as Mark Percival, Maurice Pearton and Dennis Deletant¹³ have considered Britain’s relations with Romania during and after the Second World War. Mark Percival analysed the motives behind “Britain’s ‘Political Romance’ with Romania in the 1970s”,¹⁴ while Maurice Pearton approached the dynamic of British-Romanian relations in “British-Romanian relations during the 20th century”, a conference

⁹ Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years’ Captivity in Communist Romania*, Barker, London, 1963 and Annie Samuelli’s *Women Behind Bars in Romania*. First edition was published in the United States in 1967. Two Romanian editions were published in 1992 and 2001.

¹⁰ Bogdan Barbu, *Vin americanii! Prezenta simbolica a Statelor Unite in Romania Razboiului Rece* [*The Americans are coming! The symbolic presence of the United States in Romania during the Cold War*], Bucharest, Humanitas, 2006.

¹¹ *Arhivele Securitatii* [*The Securitate Archives*], edited by the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, Bucharest, 2008.

¹² Dobrinescu, Valeriu Florin, Patroiu, Ion, *Anglia si Romania intre anii 1939-1947* [*England and Romania between 1939 and 1947*], Editura Didactica si Pedagogica, Bucharest, 1992.

¹³ Dennis Deletant, Maurice Pearton, “British Policy towards Romania: 1939-1941,” *Romania Observed*, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedica, 1998.

¹⁴ Percival, Mark, “Britain’s ‘Political Romance’ with Romania in the 1970s”, *Contemporary European History*, 4, I (1994), pp. 67-87.

paper presented at a colloquium hosted by the British Council in Bucharest.¹⁵ Given the lapse of time, some documents concerning Anglo-Romanian relations in this period have begun to appear in British Archives, mainly concerning preparations for the State Visit to London of 1978 and the fallout. Much however remains closed. The British and Romanian newspapers of the time covered the event extensively, the first focusing on reasons for having the Ceausescus invited to Buckingham and the nature of the regime, while the latter focused largely on pro-regime propaganda. An unusual degree of attention was devoted to the event since it was the first State Visit to Britain made by a Head of a Communist country. A book about Ceausescu's visit was published in English in Romania in 1979, including favourable excerpts from British newspapers, interviews granted by Ceausescu in anticipation of the visit, and highlights of the visit.¹⁶ Elena Ceausescu's translator, Violeta Nastasescu, published her memoirs in 2010, recalling, among other events to which she accompanied the President's wife, the London State Visit of June 1978 and offering details about the behaviour of the Ceausescus.¹⁷

From time to time, the Romanian press tackles certain aspects of bilateral relations, a sign that there is still an interest in analysing events involving British-Romanian relations. An article published by the Romanian historian Mihai Retegan, for example, documented a 1966 visit by the former vice-premier Barladeanu to Britain to negotiate the purchase of equipment for modernisation of Romania. By Retegan's showing, Britain's interest in the 1940s was primarily strategic, and Romania irrelevant. The British focused in the aftermath of the Second World War on the line Gibraltar-Malta-Suez-Aden-India. To control it Britain needed not Romania, but Greece. Part of this

¹⁵ British Council, Romania, British-Romanian Symposium, New Europe College, Bucharest, 4-5 April 2005, *Romania and Britain: Relations and Perspectives from 1930 to the Present*. The colloquium marked 125 years of bilateral relations.

¹⁶ State visit of President Nicolae Ceausescu to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, June 13-16, 1978, Media Publishing House, 1979.

¹⁷ Violeta Nastasescu, *Elena Ceausescu. Confesiuni fara frontiere*, Bucharest, Editura Niculescu, 2010.

strategy was the Anglo-Turkish treaty of October 1939 and the ‘percentage agreement’. Otherwise, Retegan also indicated renewed bilateral interest in the 1960s for solving lingering financial issues in order to restart what had once been a substantial trade.¹⁸

The main moments of Anglo-Romanian relations are thus familiar to a knowledgeable audience. Less known are the tactical variations which involved shifts of focus from high politics to economic or cultural interests. Emphasis changed from time to time as the conditions of the day seemed to demand while ideology and human rights counted for very little.

My dissertation will focus on those specific junctures critical to the evolution of bilateral relations. First, would be the difficult moments in the early Cold War (1948-1949) when a newly installed Communist regime accused British diplomats and employees of the British Legation of espionage. Second is the relaxation in the mid 1950s, following Khrushchev’s search for peaceful co-existence. In the 1960s relations improved as the result of new policies promoted by Bucharest, including the release of political detainees in which the British were interested in. Since 1964 Romania was an oddity in the Eastern Bloc – uniquely independent in foreign policy, and open to economic collaboration, but also unusually repressive even given Soviet norms. Romanian willingness to move on vexing financial issues, the British reaction to Ceausescu’s denunciation of the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968, and Ceausescu’s stopover to London in 1975, the subsequent meeting between Harold Wilson and Ceausescu in Bucharest in the autumn of the same year, and Ceausescu’s State Visit to London of June 1978 represented the apogee of a rapprochement in train for some time. I placed my analysis within the more complex international framework in which greater realities – particularly intra-Communist Bloc

¹⁸ Mihai Retegan, “Un vice-premier pe Tower-Bridge” [A Vice-premier on Tower Bridge], *Jurnalul National*, 20 December 2004.

dynamics, and Britain's implication in general 'Western' policy shifts - which helped to mould bilateral relations.

The reports sent from Bucharest by the British representatives are particularly important in locating essential detail, for they accurately depict the atmosphere of Communist Romania, in contrast to the regime's propaganda. The despatches sent by the Romanian representatives in London do not offer such a richness of details. They are dull in describing Britain's internal realities and focused to a greater extent on finding useful contacts beyond the Iron Curtain willing to support the regime. In much greater measure than their British counterparts, Romanian diplomats were involved in amplifying Bucharest propaganda and presenting Ceausescu as an innovator and a progressive leader. When, for example, it was assigned the task of preparing for Ceausescu's State Visit, the Romanian Embassy in London had the task in finding journalists to write positively for Romania, editors to publish Ceausescu's books and diffuse the image of a modernized Romania, a country which was achieving a major success due to the rightness of policies initiated and propagated by its leader.

Strained at the end of the 1940s, almost inexistent for the most part of the 1950s, British-Romanian relations resumed in the 1960s, reinforced by both sides' desire to develop trade, initiate cultural exchanges and solve financial issues. The British were interested in a settlement of financial issues, specifically Romania's debt, while the Romanians, still cautious, insisted on cultural exchanges in large measure to resist Russian domination. Interest in increased cultural interchange gradually subsided however as Bucharest became aware that cultural contact was not without risk while leaving the regime vulnerable to criticism concerning its prior treatment of the local employees of cultural institutions, particularly the British Council. Financial issues involved prolonged

negotiations for two decades until they were finally settled during the Prime Minister Harold Wilson's visit to Romania in September 1975.

Success on these issues set the stage for increased economic contact. The volume of Anglo-Romanian trade increased in the 1970s regardless of the different socio-economic systems. High politics had also their place in this framework strengthened by the special relation between Ceausescu and Wilson. Politics figured first on the agenda of all their meetings, followed by trade. Courtied by many world leaders, Ceausescu gloried in the role of statesman, mediating between the West and Far East, and during fraternal fracas in the Communist World. Throughout, he bridled at Moscow's pretensions. He not only courted the West, but retained friendly relations with China and Yugoslavia. He openly opposed the Brezhnev Doctrine, particularly during the 1968 Czech Spring. He recognized the Federal Republic of Germany. He involved himself in the Middle East crisis, maintaining friendly relations with both Palestine and Israel – recognized in 1967 -- and sought to encourage negotiations between the two sides without interference by Cold War patrons. Ultimately, Communist Romania was celebrated for its liberality, even though it remained one of the most repressive states in the world. In the end, Ceausescu was not executed as statesmen. He was not called to book, as Imre Nagy had been, as a deviationist. He was shot by his own people as a tyrant– a fact much of the West, including London, appears to have deliberately ignored, while other agendas were pursued.

My dissertation analyses the evolution of British-Romanian relations from the establishment of the Communist regime in Romania to its end to find the answer to the close relations between a Liberal and a Communist country. By encouraging Ceausescu and his regime and letting him reap political and diplomatic dividends from his independent line in foreign policy, Britain contributed to the maintenance of a regime careless about human rights and the free flow of people, information and ideas as provided

by the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Britain, together with other Western states, facilitated the creation of a system which could not survive the sudden disappearance of the conditions for which it had been designed to cater.

...

‘We still have ten percent’

I had never felt that our relations with Rumania and Bulgaria in the past called for any special sacrifice from us.¹⁹
(Winston Churchill)

Once completed, the percentage agreement was broadly observed by the heads of empires, even though for the eyes of the world, they protested with indignation at every consuming act of the drama. Britain agreed with the abolition of the opposition parties in Romania and even with King Michael's dismissal while, in exchange, the Soviet Union left General Marcos and his revolutionary troops to die from lack of food and ammunition in the mountains of Greece.²⁰ (Silviu Brucan)

On 2 April 1944, Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, stated publicly that the Soviets had neither the intention of threatening the territorial integrity of Romania, nor transforming it into a communist state.²¹ All they wanted was a friendly neighbour on their western frontier.²² The declaration was issued in a moment when the Romanians were negotiating their withdrawal from war and renewed immediately after Romania's switch of sides. Molotov confirmed his April declaration. The Soviet Union had no desire to acquire any part of the Romanian territory or to change the social order in Romania and, in that way, to infringe Romania's independence. The

¹⁹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, II, Their Finest Hour*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1940, p. 208.

²⁰ Silviu Brucan, *Generația irosită. Memorii [The Wasted Generation. Memoirs]*, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 9-10.

²¹ The Soviet Union 'does not pursue the aim of acquiring Romanian territory or of altering the existing social structure of Romania.' OJR Report no. 4456, 18 July 1947 Department of State, Division of research for Europe, Office of Intelligence Research, referring to telegram T-1150, Moscow, April 3, 1944. *Romania in anticamera Conferinței de Pace de la Paris. Documente, [Romania in the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents]*, Bucharest, Arhivele Naționale ale României, 1996, p. 448; Memorandum of the King Michael of Romania to President Roosevelt, 24 January 1945, Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al României [Conversations with King Michael of Romania]*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991, p. 256.

²² In reaction, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, characterized publicly the Molotov's declaration, as insincere and underlined the danger the Soviets represent for Romania. Romanian National Archives [henceforth RNA], The Central Committee of Romanian Communist Party, [henceforth CC of RCP], Collection 147, Dossier 11/1947, vol. 2, f. 11.

Soviet government was just interested in re-establishing Romania's independence together with the Romanians and free the country from the fascist yoke.²³

However, it must have been difficult for Romanians to believe that, after three years of confrontation on the battlefield, the Soviets would suddenly become Romanians' loyal friends. Four years before, on 26 June 1940, the Soviets had issued an ultimatum, demanding the immediate surrender of Bessarabia, Romania's Eastern province, and annexing also northern Bukovina.²⁴ In the summer of the same year, vexed by Romanians' determination to remain neutral, Hitler took the side of Hungary and favoured it against Romania. Through the Diktat of Vienna imposed by Hitler and Mussolini on 30 August 1940, Romanians were obliged to cede the north-western part of Transylvania (an area of 42,610 km square with a population of 2,388,774 of which 50,2 per cent were Romanians) to Hungary. One week later, on 7 September 1940, Romania gave up a southern province, Cadrilater, to Bulgaria. Overall, a territory of 101,129 km square representing 34.27 percent of the country comprising a population of 6,821,007 inhabitants, of whom the majority were Romanians, had been lost.²⁵

On 23 November 1940 Romania led by General Ion Antonescu adhered to the Anti-Comintern Pact and six months later, on 22 June 1941, declared war on the Soviet Union.²⁶ The Romanians would soon find themselves engaged in war with the Soviets'

²³ On 25 August, V.M. Molotov reasserted the pledge that his government had no intention of annexing any part of Romania or changing the social and political regime. Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, Ion Patroiu, *Anglia si Romania intre anii 1939-1947 [England and Romania between 1939-1947]*, Editura Didactica si Pedagogica, Bucharest, 1992, p. 231; RNA, the Ministry of National Propaganda, Office of Intelligence, D 939, f. 5 cited by Gheorghe Onisoru, *Instaurarea regimului communist in Romania*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 29.

²⁴ Part of Romania since 1918, Bessarabia was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1812 as a result of the Russian-Turkish war. Bucovina had never been a Russian territory and was not mentioned in the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August 1939. The Romanian provinces were annexed by the Soviets in the aftermath of an ultimatum issued on 26 June 1940, in accordance with the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement. Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania, 1856-1947 [The Great Powers and Romania, 1856-1947]*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1996, p. 301.

²⁵ A. Simion, *Dictatul de la Viena [The Diktat of Vienna]*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1996, p. 363.

²⁶ The fact that all the territories had been seized without fight created an atmosphere of discontent. The Iron Guard supported by Germany took the occasion to attack the main state institutions leading to turmoil. By appointing a General as Prime Minister on 4 September, the King Carol II hoped to re-

allies without wanting it. Britain declared war on Romania on 7 December, followed by the United States on 12 December 1941.²⁷

In 1944 Romanians found themselves again in an unfortunate situation. By now, two thirds of the country had been lost. Although still fighting on the Eastern front and taking part in all important battles, it was clear that Germany had lost the war. Negotiations with the Western Powers for Romania's exit from war commenced and continued through the spring with no result.

While the Romanian Army was still engaged in war against the Soviet Union, King Michael acted in a decisive way. On 23 August he arrested Marshal Antonescu and announced the unilateral cessation of hostilities with the Soviets.²⁸ Romania accepted the armistice terms offered by the United Nations, and announced the change of direction in a Royal proclamation.²⁹

From this moment cease any battle and hostility actions against the Soviet Union, as well as the state of war with Great Britain and the United States. Receive the soldiers of these armies with trust. The United Nations had guaranteed our independence and non-interference in our internal affairs. They admitted the injustice of the Diktat of Vienna through which Transylvania had been captured from us.

Except for the last statement, all the rest was aspiration.³⁰

The ceasefire in the absence of a signed armistice had dramatic repercussions. Claiming that they had not receive any order to stop hostilities, the Red Army advanced from the Moldavian city, Iasi, where it had been held for four months taking prisoner large numbers of Romanian soldiers who offered no resistance. During a single day, 24 August,

establish a climate of normality. The Guard's pressure had however increased and General Antonescu asked the King on 6 September to abdicate and leave the country. Antonescu assumed the executive powers in forming a national government and decided to ally with Germany, the only option in that circumstance. A. Simion, *Dictatul de la Viena [The Diktat of Vienna]*, pp. 387-391.

²⁷ Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania, 1856-1947 [The Great Powers and Romania, 1856-1947]*, p. 296 and 303-305.

²⁸ RNA, CC of RCP, Collection 147, Dossier 11/1947, vol. 2, f. 22.

²⁹ The King's message was broadcasted at 10 P.M. on 23 August. "23 August, a national treason?," *Historia*, no. 33, August 2004, p. 30.

³⁰ Florin Constantiniu, "Romania intre 1944 si 1989," [Romania between 1944 and 1989] Stephen Fischer-Galati, Dinu C. Giurescu, Ioan-Aurel Pop (coord.), *O istorie a Romanilor*, Fundatia Culturala Romana, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 1998, p. 299.

6,000 officers, 6,000 non-commissioned officers and 15,000 soldiers were arrested, interned in camps and sent over the Prut River in the territories reoccupied by the Soviet Army.³¹ A total of 175,000 soldiers and officers were captured by the Soviets.³² The depredations of the Soviet Army as it advanced into Romania seemed more an invasion than liberation.³³ Molotov's assurances proved to be empty words.

The Romanian situation was most unfortunate. Romania faced the consequences of an uncertain alliance with the Soviets, who advanced as into an enemy territory, and with the Americans who continued to bomb strategic sites, especially the oilfields. The Romanian Army, meanwhile, was soon engaged in battle with the Germans whose position had been endangered by Romania's betrayal.³⁴ It became apparent that the Soviets were taking advantage of the unclear situation of 'no peace, no war'. Anxiously, the King urged the Anglo-Americans to send envoys to Bucharest, accompanied by a token military force and the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs submitted a formal protest to the Soviet Ambassador at Ankara.³⁵

Ceasefire in absence of a signed armistice convention was compared to a chariot placed ahead of the horse. 'What else should we have done?' the King asked?. 'Say that we

³¹ King Michael's letter to President Roosevelt, 24 January 1945. Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei [Conversations with King Michael of Romania]*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 249.

³² Protesting against the situation, gen. Gheorghe Mihail resigned. Alesandru Dutu, "Totalitarism si opportunism in primii ani postbelici," in *Arhivele totalitarismului* no. 3/1995, Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, Academia Romana, pp. 54-55.

³³ Florin Constantiniu, "Romania intre 1944 si 1989," Stephen Fischer-Galati, Dinu C. Giurescu, Ioan-Aurel Pop (coord.), *O istorie a Romanilor*, p. 299.

³⁴ In this phase of the war there were 612,000 German soldiers in Romania. "Romania's contribution to the victory of the United Nations," *Rumanian News*, no. 4, 18 August, 1947, pp. 1-2.

³⁵ The American Military Mission was established in Bucharest at the beginning of October 1944. It had the purpose of representing the United States in the Allied Control Commission which was going to supervise the implementation of armistice convention until the Peace Treaty would be signed. The arrival of the American Representatives, among them the diplomat Burton Y. Berry, and General Courtland Van R. Schuyler, took place almost in the same time with Churchill's visit to Moscow where he was concluding the 'percentage agreement' with Stalin. Bogdan Barbu, *Vin americanii! Prezenta simbolica a Statelor Unite in Romania Razboiului Rece [The Americans are coming! The symbolic presence of the United States in Romania during the Cold War]*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2006, pp. 185-6.

withdraw from the Axis and, meanwhile, continue to fight?’³⁶ The delay in concluding the armistice had dramatic repercussions; it allowed the Red Army to infiltrate into the Romania.³⁷ Ultimately it was the Soviets who were accredited by the Anglo-Americans with initiating and carrying forward negotiations with Romania.³⁸

The Romanian delegation sent to Moscow to negotiate the armistice convention arrived to have their plane seized by the Soviets. Eventually reaching Moscow, they complained to the British Ambassador that their country had been occupied by the Red Army, the later replied that he would inform London.³⁹ The Romanians should not expect help from Britain, but deal with the Russians. The American Ambassador replied in a quite similar way. Neither was helpful during the negotiations. This prompted the leader of the Romanian delegation, Lucretiu Patrascanu, to remark sadly that, as regards Romania at least, the agreement between the Allies was ‘perfect’.⁴⁰ Patrascanu might have hoped that, as a Communist, he had the keys to the Russians’ heart and could negotiate lenient conditions for his country.⁴¹ His hopes were in vain. He wondered what he was going to

³⁶ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei [Conversations with King Michael of Romania]*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 164.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 280.

³⁸ The statement was made by the US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, in a press conference on 28 August 1944. OJR Report no. 4456, 18 July 1947. British and American diplomatic and military representatives also took part in the armistice talks. Department of State, Division of research for Europe, Office of Intelligence Research. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente*, Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei, Bucharest, 1996, p. 450.

³⁹ Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania 1856-1947 [The Great Powers and Romania, 1856-1947]*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 315.

⁴⁰ According to Patrascanu, the British ambassador seemed rigid and aloof, while the American was ‘more sympathetic.’ However, both directed the Romanian delegation to the Soviets. Eventually Marshal Rodion Malinowski signed the armistice on behalf of the three allies. Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania 1856-1947 [The Great Powers and Romania, 1856-1947]*, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 325-326.

⁴¹ Lucretiu Patrascanu (1900-1954) was one of the very few intellectuals amongst in the Party. A defence lawyer for the Communists before the war, he was appointed Minister of Justice in 1944, contributing decisively to the introduction of the Communist legislation into the judiciary system. During his tenure, ‘People’s courts’ of Soviet model were established with the aim of condemning the Communists’ political adversaries. Arrested four years later, in 1948, he would become the victim of one of the longest political trial, being sentenced to death in 1954. He was ‘rehabilitated’ post-mortem in 1968. Paul Sfetcu, *13 ani in anticamera lui Dej [13 years in Dej’s antechamber]*, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 202 and 241.

tell to his comrades when he would return home.⁴² He could not have known that the Allies had already reached agreement concerning Romania.⁴³

In the spring of 1944 Churchill let the Soviets know his intentions regarding Romania. While Romanian envoys were attempting to negotiate their country's extraction from war, Churchill sent a telegram to Molotov, reminding him that, as previously agreed, he regarded the Soviet Union as 'the predominating power' on Romania. 'We are relying on you to take the lead about Romania,' Churchill maintained in another telegram to Molotov. On 16 April 1944 Churchill wished Molotov success in Romanian negotiations. Two days later, in another telegram, Churchill assessed that he liked the firm tone of Lord Moyne's messages from Cairo to Marshal Antonescu and Monsieur Maniu.⁴⁴

Although Churchill seemed eager to please Molotov, the latter had reproached Churchill for having established a link with Antonescu without informing him in advance. Information about a secret operation named AUTONOMOUS leaked into press and reached the Soviets. The mission composed of Lieutenant Colonel De Chastellain, formerly Manager of 'Unirea' Oil Company, Major Porter and Captain Metianu was parachuted by the SOE into Romania on 21 December 1943. They had apparently the purpose of re-establishing contact with Iuliu Maniu, the pro-Western leader of the National Peasant Party, and convincing him that 'the only possible course for Romania was unconditional surrender to the three principal Allies.' Sabotage was another issue to be

⁴² Florin Constantiniu, "Romania între 1944 și 1989," Stephen Fischer-Galati, Dinu C. Giurescu, Ioan-Aurel Pop (coord.), *O istorie a Romanilor*, Cluj-Napoca, Fundatia Culturala Romana, 1998, p. 300.

⁴³ Seemingly it was not the Soviet Union but Britain that contributed to the postponement of the armistice since it needed approval from Dominions for the amendments of the armistice convention. Florin Constantiniu, "Romania între 1944 și 1989," Stephen Fischer-Galati, Dinu C. Giurescu, Ioan-Aurel Pop (coord.), *O istorie a Romanilor*, Cluj-Napoca, Fundatia Culturala Romana, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 1998, p. 299.

⁴⁴ 'Is there anything else you would like us to do? The National Archives, Kew, London, UK, [henceforth TNA], Public Record Office [PRO], PREM 3/374/3, Prime Minister to Molotov, 16 April 1944 and 18 April 1944.

addressed.⁴⁵ According to the Romanian press the officers carried with them a photostat copy of a peace treaty which the Germans allegedly intended to propose to the Russians.

The operation conducted by SOE caused considerable resentment in Moscow. Molotov's message to Churchill of 29 April was 'couched in offensive terms' and although the Russians were invited to participate in further SOE – OSS operations in Romania, the Western Allies decided to suspend 'for the time being' other operations in Romania.⁴⁶

On 16 January 1944, three weeks after the failure of Operation AUTONOMOUS, Churchill mentioned to Eden that the Russians might take possession of the territories which lay on the western borders of the Soviet Union. Britain would not attempt to remove the Russians from that area.⁴⁷ Romania was 'a Russian affair' as Stalin desired, while Britain would take care of Greece and continue to remain the leading Mediterranean power.⁴⁸

Although providing to fight in the West against Germany and its allies, none of the articles of the armistice convention signed in Moscow on 12 September 1944 made reference to the release of Romanian prisoners. The armistice just provided that Romania's military forces were put under the direction of the Soviets.⁴⁹

While the bulk of the army was fighting outside the country, the Communists became very active politically within what was now occupied Romania. Backed by Marshal Rodion Y. Malinowski, the chairman of the Allied Control Commission [ACC] set up with the purpose of supervising the implementation of the armistice agreement in

⁴⁵ De Chastellain and his party had been seeing certain Romanian personalities, among them Marshal Antonescu. Ciphered messages were passed to Maniu that transmitted them further to SOE HQ, in Cairo; the messages had also been communicated to Novikov. Ivor Porter, *Operatiunea Autonomă în România pe vreme de război* [Operation Autonomous with SOE in wartime Romania], Bucharest, Humanitas, 2008, p. 219.

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, PREM 3/374/3, PM/44/301, 1 May 1944.

⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, PREM 3/399/6, PM to Eden, 16 January 1944. Ivor Porter, *Operatiunea Autonomă în România pe vreme de război* [Operation Autonomous with SOE in wartime Romania], p. 130.

⁴⁸ The Russians 'would take the lead in the Romanian business and give us the lead in Greece.' Elisabeth Barker, *Churchill and Eden at War*, 1978, pp. 277-283.

⁴⁹ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al României* [Conversations with King Michael of Romania], Bucharest, 1991, p. 247.

Romania, the Communists and certain left-wing groups established the National Democratic Bloc [NDB]. The organization was joined for a short time by the National Peasant and National Liberal parties. At the beginning of October the Communists unleashed a campaign of attacks against the government.⁵⁰

As provided by the Armistice Agreement, the Soviet Union was entitled to eradicate pro Axis influences and mobilize all available resources in the war against Germany. The Soviet interference in Romania was not however confined to measures in support of the common war effort.⁵¹

The British had already decided not to oppose the 'reasonable demands' of the Soviet Union where they did not conflict with their 'vital strategic interest.' In exchange, the Soviets were supposed not to oppose their claims.⁵² An Eastern Europe dominated by the Russians was preferable to a Western Europe dominated by Germany.⁵³ The figures agreed by Churchill and Stalin in Moscow in October were just a transcript of both sides' interests. 90 per cent of Romania and 90 per cent of Greece were to be controlled by the Soviets and the British respectively. In case of Yugoslavia and Hungary the percentages

⁵⁰ Report no. 4456, "The Record of Soviet Interference in Rumanian Affairs," 18 July 1947, Department of State, Division of research for Europe, Office of Intelligence Research. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente*, Bucharest, Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei, 1996, p. 451.

⁵¹ In the draft of 23 August, the Soviets maintained that the ACC was to be called 'Allied (Soviet) High Command, acting on behalf of the Allied powers.' Molotov stress in conversation with the American Ambassador, Averell Harriman, that the Western allies could only have political contact with the Romanian government through the Russians. Dennis Deletant, "British Policy Towards Romania: 23 August 1944 - 6 March 1945", Dennis Deletant, Maurice Pearton, *Romania Observed. Studies in Contemporary Romanian History*, Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 131.

⁵² Meeting between Anthony Eden and Fyodor T. Gusev, the Soviet ambassador to London, 18 May 1944, TNA, PRO, FO 371/ 43636. Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, Macmillan, 1986, p. 206 and G. Ross, *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 178.

⁵³ The assertion belonged to Sir William Strang, Permanent Under-Secretary of the British Foreign Office. A. Resis, "Spheres of influence in Soviet Wartime Diplomacy," *Journal of Modern History*, 1981, v 53 (3), 435-7; G. Ross, *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin*, Cambridge, 1984, p. 107.

Referring to a Foreign Office memorandum on Anglo-Soviet relations, Eden pointed out on 3 April 1944 that the Soviet Union's aims included the 'domination of Eastern Europe and even the Mediterranean, and the *communizing* of much the remains.' Bennett, p. 196.

were 50-50; 75 per cent of Bulgaria under Soviet influence; the last one was changed by Stalin to 90 per cent; everything was then approved by a tick of a pencil.⁵⁴

In November the Soviets made their 90 per cent political influence over Romania felt. It was 'recommended' to King Michael that a change of Government was advisable.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, a new municipal administration was installed in Constanta, an important Black Sea port, with the support of the Soviets. The City became now an overt Russian dependency.⁵⁶ The local civil administration in Transylvania was handed over to Communist representatives with Russian help.

When, at the end of November, the Vice Commissar for Foreign Affairs, A. Vishinski, arrived in Bucharest, he obtained the replacement of the new Prime Minister, General Sanatescu, by yet another General, Nicolae Radescu. It was 6 December, one month and one day after the fall of the previous Cabinet.⁵⁷ The Soviet interference in Romania's affairs was more than evident.

⁵⁴ According to Sfikas, the mutual agreement between Churchill and Stalin reached in Moscow on 8 October 1944 represents a "vulgar manifestation of great power politics typical of the manner in which European leaders had been addressing Balkan issues for centuries." Thanasis D. Sfikas, "Toward a Regional Study of the Origins of the Cold War in South-eastern Europe: British and Soviet Policies in the Balkans, 1945-1949", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, volume 17, 1999, p. 209.

⁵⁵ The first Sanatescu government fell as General Vinogradov recommended; the Cabinet was reorganized on 5 November 1944 with Petru Groza as Vice Premier.

The Communists forced the fall of the second Sanatescu government after a month and one day. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Fundatia Academia Civica, Bucharest, 2000, p. 255; OJR Report no. 4456, "The Record of Soviet Interference in Rumanian Affairs," 18 July 1947, the Department of State, Division of research for Europe, Office of Intelligence Research. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente*, Bucharest, Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei, 1996, pp. 448-9.

⁵⁶ ACC for Romania, Observations of American Newspaper Reporters in Constanta, December 3, 1946. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente*, Bucharest, Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei, 1996, p. 451.

⁵⁷ Report no. 4456, "The Record of Soviet Interference in Rumanian Affairs," 18 July 1947, Department of State, Division of research for Europe, Office of Intelligence Research. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente*, Bucharest, Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei, 1996, p. 452.

Had Romania been abandoned to the Soviets? The question was addressed by Maniu to the British representative in Bucharest, Le Rougetel.⁵⁸ 'Surely, we are not called upon to make such admissions,' wrote Churchill on the report received from Bucharest in December 1944.⁵⁹ Maniu asked the same question when meeting the chief of the American political mission in Bucharest, Burton Berry. If the Americans intended to abandon Romania, they 'owe him the obligation of saying so and saying so at once, that he might make the best possible terms with the Soviets for the Romanian people.' Maniu reminded the Anglo-Americans that he was a sincere supporter of the Western Allies during the war and had involved himself in the negotiations for his country's withdrawal from war. Berry pointed out in his report to the Department of State that Romania was being re-organized as something of a Soviet experiment. Unless the Americans persuaded the Soviets 'to desist in their efforts to communize Romania,' they would be 'too late and the experiment being worked out in Romania would be repeated elsewhere in a more perfect form on a larger scale'.⁶⁰ The 'arrangement' concluded by Churchill and Stalin was however approved by the American President, even against the State Department arguments.⁶¹

There was no question of spheres of influence, Churchill assured the Americans, merely 'practical politics' and that the arrangement would last only for three months after

⁵⁸ In September 1944, London appointed a diplomatic representative to Bucharest, Ian Le Rougetel, who arrived in Bucharest on 1 October. The Vice-Marshal Stevenson, chief of the British Military Mission, part of the Allied Control Commission, was already there. While Stevenson was subordinated to British War Ministry, le Rougetel had to follow instructions received from Foreign Office. Two months later after Le Rougetel's arrival, his American counterpart, Burton Berry, arrived in Romanian capital. Ivor Porter, *Mihai I al Romaniei. Regele si Tara [Michael of Romania. The King and the Country]*, Bucharest, Editura Allfa, 2007, p. 121.

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, PREM 3/374/13, Minutes, Churchill's annotation on 2 December 1944, on the telegram no. 247 sent from Bucharest cited by Porter, p. 319. c, p. 319.

⁶⁰ Berry's report to the Department of State about the Soviet methods at work in Romania, 9 December 1944. Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, the Center for Romanian Studies, Iasi, 2000, pp. 473 and 475.

⁶¹ Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, was in favour of a tougher line when negotiating with the Soviet Union, which, however, did not mean that the Americans contemplated any sort of rupture in their alliance with the Soviet Union. Hull was especially eager to ensure commercial freedom to the states of Eastern Europe. According to Hull no binding territorial arrangements ought to be made about liberated territories before the peace conference and consulting the population. Bennett, p. 196.

The State Department would have proposed the establishment of 'adequate machinery for frank consultation regarding the Balkan region.'

which it would be subject of the Allies' review.⁶² The percentage agreement was presented as a 'preliminary agreement' in a letter to Roosevelt, and 'an interim guide for the wartime future' in a memorandum to the War Cabinet.⁶³

Besides the 'pedantic interference of the United States,'⁶⁴ something else displeased Churchill even more: the stance adopted by the British representatives in Bucharest. Ten percent should not have entitled them to behave 'as if they were in Greece.'⁶⁵ To Eden ten percent meant something. In January 1945, when Orme Sargent, the Deputy Under-Secretary, second in the hierarchy at the Foreign Office, underlined that Britain could not prevent the Soviets from plundering the Romanian economy because Romania had been conceded to the Soviet Union, Eden replied: 'Not quite. We still have ten percent.'⁶⁶ In what ways the ten percent influence would have prevented the Soviet from controlling Romania remained a mystery.

Ten percent certainly meant little for Churchill. His only concern was to make sure that the 90 per cent of the Soviets would become reality.⁶⁷ With this aim in mind he

⁶² The news regarding the percentage agreement reached the American media, passed to Cyrus Sulzberger Jr. of *The New York Times* by the American Ambassador to Greece. Churchill, *The Second World War*, VI, *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 75-77.

⁶³ Elisabeth Barker, *Churchill and Eden at War*, London: Macmillan, 1978, p. 284.

⁶⁴ Romania and Greece would be 'condemned to a useless regime of triangular telegrams,' while the Russians would take Romania 'whatever we say,' contented Churchill. Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, pp. 212-3.

⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, PREM 3 374/13, Minutes, Churchill to Eden, 1070/4, 4 November 1944 and 1098/4, 10 November 1944.

On 4 November Churchill wrote to Eden that Le Rougetel, evidently did not understand that the British had only 10 per cent influence in Romania and are just 'spectators. Ivor Porter citing PREM 3/374/13A/M1070. Churchill's Minute, 4 November 1944. Ivor Porter, *Mihai I al Romaniei. Regele si Tara [Michael of Romania. The King and the Country]*, Bucharest, Editura Allfa, 2007, p. 125.

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/48547, R 1771, undated handwritten note by Eden, probably January 1945 according to Mark Percival, "British Policy to Romania from the 'Percentage Agreement of October 1944 to the Moscow Agreement of December 1945. When was the Reality of Soviet Control Effectively Conceded?'" in *Romania and Britain: Relations and perspectives from 1930 to the Present*, 2005, p. 143.

⁶⁷ 'All the Balkans except Greece are going to be bolshevised and there is nothing I can do to prevent it,' Churchill said on 23 January 1945. Churchill Archive Centre, Colville Diaries, vol. 5, 11, 23 January 1945 cited by Mark Percival, "British Policy to Romania from the 'Percentage Agreement of October 1944 to the Moscow Agreement of December 1945. When was the Reality of Soviet Control Effectively Conceded?'" *Romania and Britain: Relations and perspectives from 1930 to the Present*, 2005, p. 145.

interfered frequently with the activity of the Foreign Office.⁶⁸ Instead of building up an anti-Soviet political front ‘without realising what is at stake in other fields,’⁶⁹ Britain’s representatives should have ‘encouraged’ the Romanians to co-operate ‘fully and frankly with the Russians and not to look to us or the Americans for support.’⁷⁰ Churchill was also indignant that the British representatives made ‘such a fuss’ about the deportations of about 70,000 Romanians of German origin to the Soviet Union.⁷¹

The Russians’ discourse concerning Romania had meanwhile changed. ‘Whereas in November 1944, the Russians said their only interest in Romania was in seeing the fulfilment of the terms of the Armistice,’ in the spring of 1945 the ‘theme song’ centred on security and stability.⁷² In fact, the Soviets were directly assisting the Communists in provoking agitation and inciting the peasants and workers to riot against the government.⁷³ Then, accusing the Romanian authorities of being incapable of maintaining order and securing the rear of the front, Vishinski demanded from the King the replacement of the Prime Minister, Radescu, with Petru Groza, currently Vice Premier. Gheorghe Tatarescu

⁶⁸ Churchill instructed Eden to make his will felt ‘without letting it appear in telegrams.’ Mark Percival, British Policy to Romania from the ‘Percentage Agreement’ of October 1944...,” p. 143. TNA, PRO, FO 371/43989, R 19781, Le Rougetel to FO, 1 December 1944, Churchill to Eden, 2 December 1944; TNA, PRO, PREM 3 374/13, Minute by Churchill 11 December 1944.

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/48548, R 3467, Minute by Sargent in response to Le Rougetel’s telegram to Foreign Office, 18 February 1945.

TNA, PRO, PREM 3 374/9 Handwritten minute by Churchill, 3 March 1945 and FO 371/48537, R 4365, Note by Churchill, 4 March 1945.

⁷⁰ Memo of 26 January 1945 in Martin Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, Macmillan, 1986, p. 254.

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/48536, R 2028 and R 2029, Churchill to Eden, 18 January 1945.

Mainly, men between 17 and 45 and women between 18 and 30 were deported from Romania in January 1945. The Soviets also forcibly resettled Romanians from Bukovina and Bessarabia, claiming that they were Soviet citizens.

⁷² ‘They now said that the primary interest of their Government in Romania was in security, and that the actions that they had taken had been dictated by the compelling need for security.’ The Soviets’ secondary interest in Romania was claimed to be stability. Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 479.

⁷³ The first major strike at the Malaxa metallurgical plant in Bucharest in February 1945 was the overture to the installation of the Communist regime. Following the strike, 6,000 Soviet troops and 4,000 NKVD agents had been moved to Bucharest. R.J. Crampton, *The Balkans since the second World War*, New York: Longman, 2002, pp. 74-76.

was to become Vice Premier.⁷⁴ Unless the King agreed with Vishinski's designations, the Soviets could not guarantee Romania's independence.⁷⁵ To prove the seriousness of this statement, Marshal Rodion Malinowski came to Bucharest and Soviet troops patrolled the streets.⁷⁶ The police and the gendarmerie were disarmed. The guard division was sent to the front, leaving the King with no defence to face the Communists supported by the Soviets.⁷⁷

The situation inspired a request for action from Western envoys in Bucharest. The American representative, Berry, telegraphed to Washington, requesting an immediate examination of the situation in Romania at the highest level in the spirit of the Yalta Declaration.⁷⁸ The British representative, Air Vice-Marshal D. F. Stevenson, also sent a note to London, requesting instructions. Once again Churchill asked Eden to temper the British representatives in Bucharest. London warned Ian Le Rougetel, the head of the newly re-established legation in Bucharest, not to get involved and not to provide any advice or encouragement for the King or the opposition. They had to cope with Soviet interference in Romania's domestic affairs on their own. Although, when the American State Department invoked the Yalta Declaration on free territories and called for consultation over Romania, the British ambassador in Moscow, Archibald Clark Kerr, was

⁷⁴ It was necessary for the Romanian government to assure 'order and tranquillity' in the rear of the Red Army, Vishinski pointed out in his letter to Berry of 5 March. Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Viata politica in documente. 1945*, Bucharest, Arhivele Statului din Romania, 1994, pp. 180-1.

Groza 'meets all the conditions mentioned by me previously, in accordance with the Directive.' Vishinski's telephonogram to Molotov. Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Viata politica in documente. 1945* [*Romania. Political life. Documents. 1945*], Bucharest, Arhivele Statului din Romania, 1994, pp. 165-66.

⁷⁵ Vishinski arrived from Moscow on 27 February. During a conversation with Mark Ethridge, the envoy of James Byrnes in Romania, 'Vishinski was more anxious to dispel the idea that he had been rude to the King by banging his fist on the table, than that he had changed the government. The King endeavoured to name Prince Stirbey to form a cabinet of technicians but Vishinski told him that Russia would have nobody but Groza and that to reject Groza would be an act unfriendly to the Soviet Union. Mr Vishinski says that was not interference in the affairs of another country; it was to his mind interference only in the affairs of the Allied Control Commission.' Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania* [*The Ethridge Mission in Romania*], Bucharest, Fundatia Academia Civica, 2000, p. 256.

⁷⁶ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, pp. 240 -242 and 269.

⁷⁷ "Groza Government's Activities in Disorganization of the Army," Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania* [*The Ethridge Mission in Romania*], Bucharest, 2000, p. 373.

⁷⁸ The examination was to be followed by the setting up of a truly tri-partite commission under a revised Allied Control Commission. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 479.

instructed to back Harriman's actions. If the Americans strongly believed that their reading of the Yalta agreement should be implemented then the British would support them, it was resolved. Clark Kerr should however not forget about the agreement which set up the Soviet preponderance in Romania.⁷⁹ Churchill had a 'Gentlemen's Agreement' with Stalin and pledged to observe it. The British should not therefore adopt too firm an attitude and irritate the Soviets;⁸⁰ otherwise Stalin could say 'I did not interfere with your action in Greece, why do you not give me the same latitude in Romania?'⁸¹

Admitting in a Cabinet meeting on 6 March – the day when Groza was appointed Prime Minister - that the principles of Yalta had been disregarded in Romania, Churchill stated that the British could go no further than inform Stalin about their distress. Admitting that 'the Russians had succeeded in establishing 'the rule of a communist minority by force and misrepresentation,' he was hampered in protesting against these developments by the fact that, 'in order to have freedom to save Greece, Mr. Eden and I at Moscow in October recognized that Russia should have largely preponderant voice in Romania and Bulgaria while we took lead in Greece.'⁸² London authorized through the legation to offer protection

⁷⁹ Clark Kerr in a paper on Soviet policy dated 27 March 1945 assessed that 'the Yalta Declaration is being treated by the Soviet government as little more than a sedative which cannot be allowed to interfere with what is, in the eyes of the Russians, their established right, fully admitted by us, to do as they like in Romania.' Dennis Deletant's foreword in Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 12.

⁸⁰ FO telegram to Clark Kerr, the British Ambassador in Moscow, sent at midnight on 2 March 1945 mentioned the previous agreement with the Soviets and instructed him to support all Harriman's actions. The telegram was annotated by Churchill. PREM 3/274, f. 196, Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Viata politica in documente. 1945, [Political Life in documents. 1945]*, Bucharest, Arhivele Statului din Romania, 1994, pp. 167-8.

⁸¹ Dinu C. Giurescu, *Romania's Communist Takeover: The Radescu Government*, New York, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1994, p. 96.

⁸² On 11 March Roosevelt replied to Churchill, admitting that Romania was not a place for a confrontation with the Russians. S. Radulescu-Zoner, D. Buse, B. Marinescu, *Instaurarea Totalitarismului Comunist in Romania. [The Establishment of the Communist Totalitarianism in Romania]*, pp. 84-85. According to Giurescu, Roosevelt gave complete credit to the Soviet motivation for interfering in Romanian political affairs as related to the need to secure the rear front communication lines in Romania. Dinu C. Giurescu, *Romania's Communist Takeover: The Radescu Government*, pp. 96-98.

to the former premier, General Radescu. The Legation guard detachment was ordered to open fire if there would be attempts to extract Radescu from the location.⁸³

Groza, whose appointment as a Prime Minister was aggressively demanded by the Soviets, was a wealthy Transylvanian landowner, with limited administrative experience who had served in minor Cabinet posts in the late Twenties and early Thirties. Although not a Communist, he would gain the appellation *the Red Bourgeois* for accomplishing whatever the Communists decided.⁸⁴ The other Russian favourite, Tatarescu,⁸⁵ was a person ‘thoroughly compromised by his past record;’ Prime Minister in 1939 he distinguished himself ‘by the alacrity with which he invited German troops into Romania, cooperated with the Nazis in every possible way and ceded the northern provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina to the Soviet Union.’ He was saved from the fate of Marshal Antonescu, condemned to death, ‘solely by the direct intervention of the Soviet Union.’⁸⁶ Tatarescu’s flexibility may have made him the perfect candidate in any political circumstance.

Beyond the appointment of these two, there was something else that made Churchill admit that a Communist minority had been established by force: the Communists

⁸³ S. Radulescu-Zoner, D. Buse, B. Marinescu, *Instaurarea Totalitarismului Comunist in Romania. [The Establishment of the Communist Totalitarianism in Romania]*, pp. 83-84.

⁸⁴ ‘Groza accomplished whatever we [the Communists] dictated,’ Gheorghiu-Dej, the General-Secretary of the Communist Party, would assert in 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 58/1963, f. 17.

Three days after Groza’s appointment, the North-Western part of Transylvania, rejoined Romania. The threat of permanent loss of a part of Transylvania could have been a factor in persuading King Michael to agree with Groza’s nomination. Mark Percival, “British policy on Hungarian-Romanian frontier settlement, 1944-1947,” *Occasional Papers in Romanian Studies*, no. 2, ed. by Rebecca Haynes, Schools of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1998.

⁸⁵ Groza placed as a condition on taking office not to have his program discussed until after the government had been formed. Both he and Vishinski insisted that Tatarescu be Minister of Foreign Affairs. According to Maniu, Tatarescu, whom he considered a war criminal, made a deal with Vishinski to save his neck. Tatarescu pledged to lead Romania into the Soviet orbit, Maniu told Ethridge in Bucharest on November 23, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 326.

⁸⁶ Rudolf E. Schoenfeld, American Legation, Bucharest, to the Secretary of State, November 17, 1947. Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947 [Romania. The Political life. Documents. 1947]*, Bucharest, Arhivele Statului din Romania, 1994, pp. 267 and 269.

took hold of key posts in the Ministries of the Interior, Justice and Communications.⁸⁷ ‘A government of non-entities, with a notable exception, Tatarescu,’ the former King, Carol II, noted in his diary. What was his former Prime-Minister doing ‘within this gang’ manoeuvred from Moscow?⁸⁸ ‘Behind the scene, Ana Pauker, Stalin’s right hand in Romania, leads every move. Groza is under Pauker’s influence and praises her to the sky.’⁸⁹

Under the façade of a coalition seemingly reuniting all democratic forces of the country but excluding the major political parties, the National Peasant Party [NPP] and the National Liberal Party [NLP], the new government started to limit the activity of the opposition, removing political opponents and appointing loyalist elements in local structures.⁹⁰ Claiming that many newspapers served the Fascist cause, the government restricted freedom of press and closed down many newspapers.⁹¹ People’s tribunals were

⁸⁷ Groza accepted collaboration with dissident factions of the NPP and NLP led by Anton Alexandrescu and Gheorghe Tatarescu respectively Communist propaganda indicated that the Groza government was a democratic one, including a large spectrum of democratic forces aiming at the country’s consolidation. Of the 18 ministers, four represented the Communist Party, three represented the Social Democratic Party, three the Peasants Front, one the Patriotic Union, one the Trade Unions, one the “Democrat” Priests, three the branch created by Tatarescu apart from the National Liberal Party, one the dissident faction from the National Peasants Party created by Anton Alexandrescu and one represented the Army. The principal offices in the cabinet were held by Mircea Durma, dissident National Liberal as minister of Finance, subsequently resigned; Teohari Georgescu, Communist, as Minister of Interior, Lucretiu Patrascanu, Communist, as Minister of Justice; Gen. Constantin Vasiliu-Rascanu, who professed to be non-partisan but was insisted upon by Russia for the post as Minister of War; Petru Constantinescu-Iasi, Communist, as Minister of Propaganda; and Gheorghiu-Dej, Communist, as Minister of Public Works and Communications. The Socialists were represented by Lotar Radaceanu, Minister of Labour, Tudor Ionescu, Minister of Mines and Oils and Stefan Voitec, Minister of Education. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, pp. 256-7.

⁸⁸ King Carol II’s diary, the note of 7 April 1945. Carol al II-lea, *Intre datorie si pasiune. Insemnari zilnice [Between Duty and Passion. Daily notes]*, vol. IV (1943-1945), editors Marcel-Dumitru Ciuca; Narcis Dorin Ion, Bucharest, Curtea Veche, 2000, p. 311.

⁸⁹ King Carol II’s diary; the note of 30 April 1945. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-9.

⁹⁰ On 11 March, the newspapers announced the dismissal of all prefects appointed by the former government in Northern Transylvania. S. Radulescu-Zoner, D. Buse, B. Marinescu, *Instaurarea Totalitarismului Comunist in Romania. [The Establishment of the Communist Totalitarianism in Romania]*, p. 85.

⁹¹ Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Viata politica in documente. 1945*, Bucharest, Arhivele Statului din Romania, 1994, pp. 180-1.

established, overriding or ignoring legal procedures, to punish seemingly those identified as war-criminals.⁹²

Whatever decision Groza adopted in domestic or foreign policy, it was taken subsequent to obtaining Soviet consent, strictly limiting Romania's sovereignty.⁹³ Appointed on Soviet demand, Groza did whatever was required. Two months after his appointment, he took measures to strengthen Romania's ties with the Soviet Union to the extent that the country's economy was soon controlled by its neighbour. The first capitulation of major importance was an agreement signed in Moscow on 8 May 1945 by which *Sovroms* (Soviet-Romanian) joint companies were established.⁹⁴ 'It is probably the Russian intention to prepare by the creation of these companies [*Sovroms*] for the complete integration of the Romanian economy with that of the Soviet Union, from which it is but a short step to the political incorporation of Romanian territory into the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics,' the British representative in Bucharest reported.⁹⁵

Although it could not fool the people, the close collaboration with the Soviet Union was presented as having the purpose of speeding up the country's economic recovery. Trade exchanges would be based on full equality, the prices being those of the international market and the two parties would have equal share and equal rights within the *Sovroms*, the propaganda claimed.⁹⁶ In fact using these devices the Soviets controlled the Romanian economy, while the commercial agreements prevented Romania from resuming

⁹² A.P. Samson, "Chronicle of Home Affairs," *Rumanian Review*, no. 1/1946, p. 19.

⁹³ Minute of the ACC meeting of 16 July 1945. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente [Romania in the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents]*, p. 461.

⁹⁴ Asked about the agreements, gen. Susaikov assessed that they refer to a mutual exchange of goods, denying any intention to establish joint companies. D-383, Notes on the conference between the deputy chairman of the ACC and the Gen. Schuyler, 21 June 1945. Marin Radu Mocanu (editor), *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente [Romania in the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents]*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 467.

⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78613, R 9045/11338/37, Roberts, Bucharest, to FO, 13 September 1949.

⁹⁶ Benefiting from 'exceptional imports of equipment from the U.S.S.R.,' the profits of the companies were to remain in the country, the Romanians claimed. The 'Sovrompetrol' company handled the exploitation of oil, the 'Sovromtransport' company river and sea-transport, 'TARS' air transport, 'Sovromlemn' timber exploitation, 'Sovrombank' the financing of trade between the two countries. It was claimed that 'TARS' received from the Soviet Union 17 big airplanes LI 2 (Douglas type), 10 air planes PO2, 88 engines, 29 motor trucks etc. *Rumanian Review* 6/October 1946, pp. 9 and 12.

its relations with countries which were not under the Soviet influence. 'To this game Groza had adhered without scruples.'⁹⁷

In the meantime, as provided by the armistice convention, the Romanian army had to fight under Soviet command, contributing to the capture of Budapest and to the advance into Czechoslovakia. The role of the Romanian army was acknowledged by Eden. He indicated in the House of Commons on 24 January 1945 that Romania had rendered substantial support to the Allied cause by maintaining fourteen divisions on the anti-Hitlerite front.⁹⁸

Romania contributed to the war against Germany and its allies with an army which ranked fourth amongst the armies fighting the Third Reich. The casualties of the Romanian army in the war against Germany and Hungary amounted to 169,822 men (including dead, wounded and missing). Romania's defection from the Axis was an important factor in the collapse of the German Eastern front;⁹⁹ it prevented the Germans from making a stand at the Carpathians, thereby shortening the war.¹⁰⁰

The Romanian troops were cited in orders of the day by Stalin.¹⁰¹ King Michael was awarded the 'Victory' order for his 'brave act of determinedly orientating the Romanian policy towards rupture with Hitlerite Germany and siding with the United

⁹⁷ King Carol II's note of 1 December 1945. *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 2 (18), 1998, p. 27.

⁹⁸ Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, Ion Patroiu, *Anglia si Romania intre anii 1939-1947 [England and Romania between 1939-1947]*, Bucharest, 1992, p. 257.

⁹⁹ The German Field Marshall von Rundstedt acknowledged that one of the principal factors leading to the German defeat was the loss of the resources of Romania, chiefly the loss of Romanian oil. "Romania's contribution to the victory of the United Nations," *Rumanian News*, 4/August 1947, pp. 1-3.

Marshall's Keitel report to Berlin. Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania 1856-1947 [The Great Powers and Romania, 1856-1947]*, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 315-316.

¹⁰⁰ Citation from the Legion of Merit awarded by the Americans to the King Michael on 20 March 1946. Eleodor Focsaneanu, *Doua saptamani dramatice din istoria Romaniei. 17-30 Decembrie 1947, [Two dramatic weeks in the history of Romania, 17-30 December 1947]*, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 136-137, annexes IV a and b; Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 255.

¹⁰¹ The First army and the Fourth army fought under the command of the Soviet Marshal Malinowski. Cited were also the Air-Force Corps and the Second Tank Regiment. "Romania's contribution to the victory of the United Nations," *Rumanian News*, no. 4, 18 August 1947, p. 3.

Nations at a moment when the German defeat could not yet be clearly foreseen.’¹⁰² The King was also awarded the American Legion of Merit in degree of Chief Commander for ‘extraordinary fidelity and exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to the cause of the Allied Nation in the struggle against Hitlerite Germany.’¹⁰³ The awards did not impede, however, Romania’s sovietisation or Michael’s approaching downfall.

For many years thereafter, the government would point out that the Soviet Union was ‘genuinely and disinterestedly concerned’ with the development of Romania. The press periodically published articles to illustrate that fact. Normal economic exchanges were presented as evidence of the invaluable economic assistance which the Soviet Union [was] according Romania’¹⁰⁴ and exports to Romania were announced as economic aid.¹⁰⁵ The agreements concluded in 1949 led however to an increasing dependence of Romania upon the Soviet Union. ‘It is probable that the Soviet Union counts for over one half of Romania’s total foreign trade and the Russian orbit countries altogether for at least two thirds. That the Soviet Union has, from her insignificant pre-war position in the pattern of Romanian foreign trade, become by far the most important of this country’s customers and suppliers are an undisputed fact.’ Mentioning that an economic agreement was signed by Barladeanu, the Minister of Foreign Trade, *Scanteia* of the 5 March 1949 was ‘full of eulogies’ of the Soviet Union, pointing also to the previous abuses of the ‘capitalist and

¹⁰² On 6 July 1945 the Soviet Presidium decided on granting the King Michael the order ‘Victory.’ Ioan Scurtu, (ed.), *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1945 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents, 1945]*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 286-7.

The order Victory was conferred for the ‘courageous act of orienting decisively orientation the Romanian policy towards rupture with Hitlerite Germany by joining the United Nations in a moment when the defeat of Germany could not yet be clearly foreseen.’ *Rumanian Review*, 1/1946, p. 22.

¹⁰³ Citation for the Legion of Merit, given in Washington, on 20 March 1946, in Eleodor Focsaneanu, *Doua saptamani dramatice din istoria Romaniei. 17-30 Decembrie 1947, [Two dramatic weeks in the history of Romania, 17-30 December 1947]*, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 136-137, annex IV a and b.

¹⁰⁴ Soviet deliveries ‘ahead of schedule’ (raw cotton, ferrous metals, lorries, microscopes, medical supplies etc) were mentioned as arriving in Romania. *Rumanian News*, no. 228, 26 September 1948, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Protocol no. 17 of the Political Bureau of the CC meeting of PMR, 30 August 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 44/1963, ff. 41-50.

imperialist Western countries'. That were 'the normal ingredients of any speech or article,' the British noted. Romania was to supply to the Soviet Union oil products, timber, locomotives, wagons, chemical goods, meat, consumer goods etc, while the Soviet Union would supply industrial equipment, motor cars, agricultural machinery, iron ore, coke, cotton, seeds etc.¹⁰⁶

By the summer of 1948 the Romanian POWs were freed from Soviet labour camps. Their return in a steady flow of about 1,000 a day was hailed by the press as one of the many ways in which Romania was helped by her great Eastern neighbour. While it was not explained why the POWs returned home three years after the end of the war, the newspapers underlined that they were 'unanimous' in praising the 'humane treatment' they had been accorded in captivity. Back home they were expected to take part in another 'struggle,' this time for the rehabilitation of the national economy.¹⁰⁷

While they were in the Soviet camps, the POW's were told that it would be better for their country to become a republic of the U.S.S.R. since Romania was just 'a small and a poor country.'¹⁰⁸ Many Romanians began to fear that their country would be annexed by the Soviets.¹⁰⁹ That was not going to happen, Gheorghiu-Dej, the Communist leader, believed. His confidence was based a simple reason: 'the Soviet Union would have nothing

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78613, R 3893/11338/37, Roberts, Bucharest, to C. R. Attlee, 31 March 1949, Soviet-Romanian Trade and Payments Agreement for 1949; FO 371/78613, R 1094/11338/37 – Telegram from Moscow to FO, 28 January 1949 on the Soviet-Romanian trade and payments agreement signed on 24 January.

¹⁰⁷ In mid June 1948, *Scanteia* announced that 1,428 former prisoners of war arrived at Iasi. Roumanian Press Review 1114, 17 June 1948, Bennet to Holman, British Information Office, p. 2. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 121, vol. 2, f. 182. "POW's return from USSR" was also reported by *Rumanian News*, no. 160, 18 July 1948, p. 1. A convoy of 1,300 ex POWs returning to Romania from the Soviet Union was announced by *Rumanian News*, no. 235, 3 October 1948, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ RNA, The propaganda department, Dossier 35/1964, f. 7 in Constantin Moraru, *Politica Externa a Romaniei [Romania's Foreign Policy]*, p. 299.

¹⁰⁹ Letters sent by Romanians to BBC mentioned the 'imminent danger' of incorporation into the Soviet Union. Note on British propaganda and proposals to counter it, 16 January 1948. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 16/1948, ff. 1-5.

The rumour about Romania becoming a Soviet republic circulated amongst diplomats in Bucharest. *Magazin Istoric* no. 12/1997.

to get from this.¹¹⁰ He was right. The Soviets could not have gained more from a formal annexation of the country than they had using all the methods and devices they used to control Romania.

Even without incorporating Romania, the Soviets exerted a total domination over the country's economy and military, refashioning also education and culture. The Constitution, the 'Parliament,' and the local councils were all remodelled on the Soviet pattern.¹¹¹ The Soviets also exerted an important political influence through the Communists of non-Romanian origin; trained in the Soviet Union they arrived in Romania along with the Soviet Army. Many of them had an unsavoury reputation as being unscrupulous in accomplishing the Soviet objectives. Some of them such as Ana Pauker were confident that the best option for Romania was to become a member state of the Soviet Union.¹¹²

From the very beginning, the Communist Party from Romania acted as Moscow's agent and its policy was but a reflection of the Soviet party line. Once the line was established, it bound all party members and those that depended upon them. Although proudly proclaiming 'we made the revolution, we did nothing but play the roles prescribed by Moscow in its script for Romania,' the ideologue of the Communist Party, Silviu Brucan, would later admit.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ One of his Communist fellows, the Minister of Finance, Vasile Luca, was in favour of Romania's incorporation into the Soviet Union. In 1952 he would be sacked along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ana Pauker, and the Minister of Interior, Teohari Georgescu. Politburo's meeting, 7 December 1961. *Magazin Istoric [Historical Review]* no. 5, May 1999, pp. 23-24.

¹¹¹ Visit of the Secretary of State to Romania, 2-7 October 1965. Annex A to Steering Brief, Romania-Background. FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, FO Minute, Complete Set of Briefs for Mr. Thomson's visit.

¹¹² Pauker's assertion was conveyed to Mark Ethridge by Maniu. Ethridge, the editor of the *Louisville Courier* newspaper, was sent to Romania and Bulgaria, following the decision of James Byrnes, the United States Secretary of State. It was 'a fact-finding mission.' Memorandum of conversation, Mark Ethridge and Iuliu Maniu Bucharest, November 24, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 327.

¹¹³ Silviu Brucan, *Generația irosită, Memorii. [The wasted generation. Memoirs]*, pp. 9-10.

A day after Groza's appointment as Premier, on 7 March 1945, a Soviet delegation led by Evgheni Suhlov went to Bucharest to transmit the new instructions for the country's communization. A three-year plan, followed by another two of five years duration each, was to be implemented by the new government. The plans provide for a land reform in which peasants were to be deprived of their land designed to pave the way for their inclusion in the collectivist system and the further reorientation of population from countryside to urban centres. Other measures included: the reorganization of the army, including the creation of a popular militia of the NKVD type; the liquidation of the banks owned by the National Liberal Party leaders; the King's abdication and the royal family's expulsion from Romania; the gradual suppression of import-export companies trading with the U.S. and Britain; the reorientation of the exports towards the Soviet Union; and the exclusion of the traditional parties from political life. Not a single foreign citizen, except from the countries under Soviet influence would be allowed to enter Romania.¹¹⁴

By 1948 everything from the list seemed to have been accomplished. Industry was nationalised, collectivisation had begun, private traders and artisans reorganised into cooperatives, the Church had been subdued. Romania was virtually cut off from the non-Communist world.

¹¹⁴ A confidential report sent to Washington by an agent of the Office of Strategic Services [OSS], mentioned the measures to be taken of the three years plan. S. Radulescu-Zoner, D. Buse, B. Marinescu, *Instaurarea Totalitarismului Comunist in Romania. [The Establishment of the Communist Totalitarianism in Romania]*, pp. 83-84; Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, "Modelul Stalinist de sovietizare a Romaniei, II", *Arhivele totalitarismului* no. 3/1995, Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, pp. 28-29.

To go to war for Romania?

I left Bucharest with a feeling of sadness, and
deeply thankful that I had not been born a Romanian.
(Archibald Clark Kerr)¹

Once installed as Prime Minister Groza attempted by every possible manoeuvre to associate himself with the very popular King Michael and establish the 'unshakable solidarity' between the King and the Government.² The 'royal strike', which followed Groza's refusal to resign, did not help in the maintenance of this charade. The King refused to sign any documents sign from his rebellious Prime Minister and appealed the Anglo-Americans representatives in the Allied Control Commission for support.

The Vice-Premier Tatarescu stated that the King's strike was determined by foreign pressure. He alluded in this way to the British' and Americans' declarations that they would not recognize the Romanian government for it did not represent all political forces. 'But how could they know what the real situation in Romania is?' Tatarescu wondered. 'How could the British, who were incapable of appreciating their own domestic situation, pretend they could understand the politics of a far away country with which contact and the possibility of information had been lost?'³

The summer of 1945 brought new British and American Governments, and a firmer attitude toward their former War Ally. Both the Attlee and Truman administrations were determined to challenge the supremacy of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. Clement

¹ Archibald Clark-Kerr travelled to Romania as a member of the tri-partite commission instituted to supervise the implementation of the Moscow resolution. (December 1945-January 1946), P. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania. British and American Policies towards Romania: 1938-1947*, Los Angeles, 1977, p. 151.

² Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 479.

³ Tatarescu referred in his speech to the upset British general elections of July 1945, and Churchill's defeat. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 16/1946, ff. 4-5.

Attlee, and the Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, began to call for a tough line against Soviet ambitions in Eastern Europe and an end to the apparent drift in British policy.⁴ The British ambassador in Moscow was instructed to tell the Soviets that the British ‘found themselves unable to consider the governments [of Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary] as representative or democratic within the meaning of the Potsdam decisions and complained that the Soviets were acting in the ACC of these countries without consultation with the British and American representatives.’⁵

The new Truman administration also challenged the Soviets, pointing to Yalta Conference at which it was agreed that ‘interim governmental authorities’ should be broadly representative. Harry Truman rejected Stalin’s attempt to insert an amendment to the American proposals at Potsdam on 21 July which would have involved the recognition of the East European satellite governments. Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary and Romania would only be recognized when they were established on a proper basis, not before. At Potsdam, the Americans were firmly supported by the British delegation. Truman was supported by Churchill and Attlee, while James Byrnes enjoyed backing from Anthony Eden and Ernest Bevin at meetings with Molotov.⁶

Soon after the return of Stalin and Molotov from Potsdam, on 6 August, the Soviet government communicated to their representatives in Bucharest, Colonel General I.Z. Susaikov, the chief of the ACC, and A.P. Pavlov, the political adviser, the decision to

⁴ “Stock-taking after VE-day”, Memorandum by Sir Orme Sargent, 11 July 1945. Thanasis D. Sfikas, “Toward a Regional Study of the Origins of the Cold War in South-eastern Europe: British and Soviet Policies in the Balkans, 1945-1949”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, volume 17, 1999, pp. 217-218.

⁵ Documents on British Policy Overseas (DBPO), series I, volume VI, London: HMSO, 1991, no. 5, p. 19: Bevin to Clark Kerr, 20 August 1945.

Established six weeks after the Armistice Convention was signed, the Allied Control Commission functioned under a Soviet chairman. The Soviet Chairman used to issue orders in the name of the Control Commission, while the American and British representatives were reduced to the role of observers frequently hearing first from the Romanian public of orders issued by the ACC. Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 467.

⁶ Although Molotov argued that the states in case did more to help the defeat of Germany than Italy, Eden pointed out that these governments were not regarded as representative, being mainly composed of communists. Molotov denied it and said that in Romania the King had appointed the Cabinet. ‘With a little help from Vishinski, perhaps?’ asked the British Foreign Secretary. Bennett, p. 331.

restore diplomatic relations with Romania. The Romanian government was officially recognized by the Soviets.⁷

Protesting against the way the Soviets undertook to implement the Yalta Declaration the Americans called for free elections and proposed that a Council of Foreign Ministers meet to discuss the issue.⁸ In his radio speech to the American nation on 9 August, President Harry Truman recalled that at Yalta it was agreed that

the three governments would assume a common responsibility in helping to re-establish in the liberated and satellite nations of Europe governments broadly representative of democratic elements in the population. That responsibility still stands. We all recognize it as a joint responsibility of the three governments. It was reaffirmed in the Berlin Declarations on Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary. These nations are not to be spheres of influence of any one power. They are now governed by Allied control commissions composed of representatives of the three governments which met at Yalta and Berlin.⁹

On 17 August Roy Melbourne, the American representative in Bucharest, transmitted to the Romanian government a verbal note, reminding them of the Potsdam communiqué of 3 August and President Truman's speech addressed to the American nation on 9 August.¹⁰ The United States could not re-establish diplomatic relations with Romania, as it had been configured, as it was ruled by an unrepresentative government.

⁷ Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 480.

⁸ Truman also referred to the establishment of the Council of Foreign Ministers as agreed in Berlin. The Council was going to be 'the continuous meeting ground of the five principal governments, on which to reach common understanding regarding the peace settlements. This does not mean that the five governments are going to try to dictate to, or dominate, other nations.' The Council of Foreign Ministers was supposed to lay the ground for peace settlements: 'One of the first tasks of the Council of Foreign Ministers is to draft proposed treaties of peace with former enemy countries – Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland.' President Truman radio speech to the nation from the White House at 10 PM on 9 August 1945. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, containing the public messages, speeches and statements of the President, April 12 to December 21, 1945, Washington D.C., U.S. Government, Printing Office, 1961, p. 212. The full text was published in the *New York Times*, 10 August 1945, p. 12.

⁹ Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, containing the public messages, speeches and statements of the President, April 12 to December 21, 1945, Washington D.C., U.S. Government, Printing Office, 1961, p. 212.

¹⁰ C.V.R. Schuyler, *Misiune Dificila. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946)*, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 175-176.

On the evening of 18 August the King's secretary, Mircea Ionnitui, informed Melbourne on the King's intention to announce that he would consult the leaders of the four major parties in forming a new government. Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 197.

We made known our attitude when Groza government came to power, and anything of what the government had done since, do not justify a change of attitude. It goes without saying that we cannot consider, in any case, this government truly representative and therefore cannot initiate diplomatic relations with him.¹¹

Untroubled Groza told the King that he considered the American note null and void.¹² He had a similar opinion on the British Government's note which the King showed him on 19 August. Although shorter and more moderate than Melbourne's communication, it had a similar content: the Romanian government was not considered representative. Groza was unmoved. Since the British note did not come through official channels it should be disregarded, he maintained. 'There is a government and there is a Foreign Minister. A foreign power that directly contacts the King does not follow the official channel.' The Americans had submitted their note to the Foreign Minister, Groza admitted. However, they were in error as well. Since Romania was under the Armistice convention, the note should have been addressed to the ACC, particularly as the Americans did not recognize the present government. Direct, official communication with the Foreign Ministry and its subordinate bodies implied an implicit recognition, Groza assessed.¹³ Thus, both the Americans, who contacted the Foreign Minister instead of the ACC, and the British, who submitted their note directly to the King and not to the government since they did not recognize it, had failed to proceed correctly, in Groza's view. Both communications were ignored.

Encouraged by the Potsdam Communiqué and backed by all the party leaders who had previously supported him in Antonescu's removal from power – excluding the

¹¹ Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 197.

¹² The *Note verbale* transmitted by Roy Melbourne to the Romanian Foreign Minister, had been read by Groza to the Council of Ministers convened on 24 August in connection with the Royal strike. Groza maintained that there had been consultations between the King and the Western representatives which bypassed him. *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1945 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents, 1945]*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 332.

¹³ *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1945 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents, 1945]*, p. 333.

Communists -- the King determined to appoint a new Prime Minister.¹⁴ It was important to install the new before the parade scheduled for 23 August since the Soviets could have used the anniversary of the coup to demonstrate support for the Groza Government.¹⁵ During his conversation with the King, Groza himself maintained that his government was stronger than ever, and assured King Michael that the Soviets would eventually ensure the government's recognition by the Anglo-Americans. He suggested that the King would do well to maintain him in power.¹⁶ When King Michael asked for Groza's resignation anyway, the Prime Minister refused to comply. The following day, on 20 August, he again met the King and, according to his account, attempted to clarify the situation.

“Your Majesty, I am an old man, so please help me to remember when did you ask for my resignation?” His Majesty replied that he had not said that to me. I insisted: the Marshal of the Court told Maniu about that. The King said that neither the Marshal nor he could have said that. Mr. Maniu and the Marshal [of the Court] shall resolve on this issue! . . . coming back again to the resignation, I said, “Majesty, I don’t recall when exactly during our conversation I was asked to resign.” “I asked you to help me.” “Was the word resignation pronounced the previous day?” His Majesty said that it was not. “But I understood that you would help me and let me establish another government which would be recognized.” I said that I did not know that by giving help he meant to resign. It did not cross my mind that His Majesty had this desire.’¹⁷

It was for the first time in Romanian history that a resignation was demanded by a King and the government's chief refused to resign.’¹⁸ King Michael requested assistance in the establishment of a representative and democratic government. On 20 August the King met Air Vice-Marshal Stevenson and General Schuyler. The following day Susaikov reproached the King for ‘playing the British and American game.’ Had the King discussed

¹⁴ Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 480.

¹⁵ C.V.R. Schuyler, *Misiune Dificila. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946)*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 179.

¹⁶ Dorin-Liviu Batfoi, *Petru Groza, ultimul burghez. O biografie [Petru Groza, the Last Bourgeois. A Biography]*, Compania, Bucharest, 2004, p. 326.

¹⁷ The conversation of 20 August between him and the King was recounted by Groza few days after, during the meeting of the Council of Ministers. Record of the meeting of the Council of Ministers on the Royal strike, *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1945 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents, 1945]*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 335.

¹⁸ Titel Petrescu, the leader of the Social Democratic Party, in a conversation with Mark Ethridge. Bucharest, 27 November 1945. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 369.

the issue with him, he would have suggested a convenient solution.¹⁹ Until Groza resigned, the King decided, he would not sign any documents originating from the government; nor would he participate in any public meeting that would have required the presence of any member of the government.²⁰

Faced with this challenge, Groza convened the Council of Ministers and reassured them of continued and unconditional Soviet support, as reaffirmed by a recent note signed by Molotov himself.²¹ On 23 August, the Soviet Deputy Chairman of the ACC made clear that the Soviet government was against Groza's removal. The Soviets claimed that Groza government enjoyed the full support of the population and fulfilled its responsibilities and obligations in a manner worthy of all praise.²²

While Schuyler called Washington for immediate consultations concerning Romania, the Air Vice-Marshal Stevenson seemed convinced that the Soviets would eventually back off. Stevenson apparently behaved as instructed by London: keeping aloof if events headed to a climax.²³

Although the Romanians desired to resume ties with Britain and the United States, 'the resumption of these relations should not distress and weaken our relations with the other friends, vital to our country,' the Vice-Premier Tatarescu maintained. Claiming that he was the first politician in the country who had advocated for an alliance with the Soviet Union, Tatarescu assessed that friendship with the great Eastern neighbour constituted the

¹⁹ C.V.R. Schuyler, *Misiune Dificila. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946) [Difficult Mission. Diary. (28 January 1945-20 September 1946)]*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 179.

²⁰ In accordance with this decision, the King did not participate in the festivities on 23 August. Dinu Giurescu, *Imposibila incercare. Greva regala [The Impossible Endeavor. The Royal Strike]*, 1999, p. 20.

²¹ Record of the meeting of the Council of Ministers on the Royal strike, *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1945*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 337.

²² Minutes of ACC meeting of August 23, 1945. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente [Romania in the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents]*, p. 457.

²³ C.V.R. Schuyler, *Misiune Dificila. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946)*, pp. 192-193.

prerequisite of Romania's development.²⁴ Collaboration with the Soviet Union was 'a vital condition and, at the same time, a guarantee of our political, economic and social consolidation.' Therefore, those trying 'sometimes accidentally, but most of the time intentionally, to damage the Soviet-Romanian friendship' or 'to prevent the Soviet-Romanian collaboration' were not serving Romania's cause. Tatarescu had in fact accused the opposition of trying to undermine the state since anyone challenging the validity of the government worked, in his view, against Romania's interests.²⁵

Interestingly, these views came from a politician who was perceived even by the Communists as an opportunist. A former dissident of the National Liberal Party, Tatarescu established his own faction in the aftermath of the Second World War. Then, asserting that his party had a left orientation, he accepted collaboration with the Communists.²⁶ For this and many others of his gestures, Tatarescu was seen as being the 'personification of political immorality.'²⁷ His appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs, favoured by Ana Pauker, who later replaced him, was opposed by Patrascanu, the Minister of Justice. It would have been better to collaborate with the National Liberal Party instead of

²⁴ Stelian Neagoe, *Cazul Gheorghe Tatarescu. Plata si rasplata 'tovarasilor de drum,' [George Tatarescu's case. The Payment and the Reward of the Fellow Travellers]*, Bucharest, 2003, p. 152.

'The friendship and collaboration with the Soviet Union constitutes the basis of the foreign policy carried on by the Rumanian state which, likewise, aspires to friendship and collaboration with all Western Democracies, with the United States and Great Britain and especially with France to whom we are bound by so many traditions and affinities of race and culture, and last but not least, with our democratic neighbours,' Gheorghe Tatarescu, "Two Great Problems of Rumania: the Peace Conference and the General Elections," *Rumanian Review*, no. 2, June 1946, p. 10.

²⁵ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 16/1946, ff. 8-9.

²⁶ Members of Tatarescu's faction seemed to have believed that the only chance to maintain their high position in economy and finances was by cooperating with the Soviet installed government. They might have also believed that they could slow down the communization of Romania. Schoenfeld's report to the Secretary of State, 17 November 1947. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947 [Romania. Political life. Documents. 1947]*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 269-271.

²⁷ Tatarescu began his political career as a deputy of the National Liberal Party. He was appointed Prime Minister in 1934 and held on to the premiership for three years. He then became Foreign Minister. A close associate of former King Carol, he was one of the latter's principal assistants in creating a royal dictatorship and in the adoption of an authoritarian constitution in 1938. At this time, Tatarescu formed a new political party with the resounding name of the 'Front of the National Renaissance,' an act that brought about a complete break with the National Liberal Party. He regained the premiership in 1939. Schoenfeld to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, November 17, 1947. National Archives of the United States, Washington D.C., Department of State, R.G. 59, Roll 9, Division of European Affairs, 1946-1949. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947 [Romania. Political life. Documents. 1947]*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 267 and 269.

Tatarescu's faction of 'blackmailers and well-known bribers,' Patrascanu assessed.²⁸ However, Tatarescu remained loyal to Groza and refused to concur with the King's request for resignation. 'Without asking time for reflection, I told the King's envoy that I remain faithful to my commitments to the Bloc and the King should not count on me as an accomplice to the biggest mistake of his reign.'²⁹

Tatarescu hinted to the Anglo-Americans as having influenced the King's decisions.³⁰ The assertion that the King's gesture was inspired by the Anglo-Americans was however a recurrent theme. On 10 September 1945, the Romanian newspapers reproduced an editorial from *Izvestia*, highly critical of the 'political interference' of the United States and Britain in Romania. It was maintained that the King had nothing to reproach to his government and in asking for Groza's resignation, he was just following the suggestion of the Anglo-Americans.³¹ 'The clash between the Anglo-Saxons and Stalin had begun,' the former King Carol II noted in his diary, 'but it is sad that it is taking place at Romania's and Michael's expense . . . It had conceded too much to all the Soviet requirements in the past, adopting the nefarious policy of spheres of influences, for anyone to believe that England would fight today with any arm than that of intrigue.'³²

The political crisis reached its climax on 8 November, the feast day of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, when people gathered peacefully in front of the Royal Palace to celebrate and show their support for King Michael. The government's reaction was brutal. In the clash which followed eleven people were killed and 75 injured.³³

²⁸ Victor Frunză, *Istoria stalinismului în România [The History of Stalinism in Romania]*, Bucharest, 1990, pp.187 and 308.

²⁹ Stelian Neagoe, *Cazul Gheorghe Tatarescu. Plata si rasplata 'tovarasilor de drum,' [Gheorghe Tatarescu's case. The Payment and Reward of the Fellow Travellers]*, Bucharest, 2003, p. 147.

³⁰ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 16/1946, ff. 3-4.

³¹ C.V.R. Schuyler, *Misiune Dificila. Jurnal (28 ianuarie 1945 – 20 septembrie 1946) [Difficult task. Journal. 28 January 1945 – 20 September 1946]*, p. 196.

³² King Carol II's diary, the note of 9 September 1945, Carol al II-lea, *Intre datorie si pasiune. Insemnari zilnice [Between Duty and Passion. Daily notes]*, vol. IV (1943-1945), Bucharest, 2000, p. 361.

³³ S. Radulescu-Zoner.; D.Buse; B.Marinescu, *Instaurarea Totalitarismului Comunist in Romania. [The Establishment of the Communist Totalitarianism in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 100-102.

In mid-November the Americans sent an envoy to evaluate the situation. He met members of the government and the leaders of the opposition. The first were optimistic about finding a solution to the royal strike. Casting the blame upon the King's entourage the Minister of War, General Rascanu, maintained that the crisis could be resolved in a very simple way. Groza should pretend that he would step down and the King refuse to discharge him. This would save the King's prestige.³⁴ The Minister of Justice, Patrascanu, also believed that the King should reconsider his position and make the first move, summoning General Susaikov for a discussion and, subsequently, the American and British representatives in ACC.³⁵ Maniu called for a firmer Anglo-American attitude toward the Soviets. 'More than words were necessary if anything substantial was to be achieved'. Threats would be more effective. The threat to leave the negotiations or even the threat of war!³⁶ Maniu's advice suggests despair rather than hope.³⁷ The Soviet puppet government whose only aim was to subordinate Romanian interests to those of the Soviet Union had to be overturned promptly, Maniu recommended.³⁸ The leader of the National Liberal Party, Bratianu, suggested that the Soviets be compelled to apply the principles of the Yalta and Potsdam Conventions.³⁹

³⁴ Rascanu believed that the King made a mistake by refusing to participate in the first celebrations of the *coup d'état*; the King should not have mixed up the issue of national celebration with the political situation; he should not have insulted the army by his absence. During the festivities certain Soviet generals were receiving decorations and that required the King's presence. Memorandum of conversation. Mark Ethridge and General Rascanu, Minister of War, Bucharest, 22 November 1945. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 308-9.

³⁵ 'Perhaps a few changes could be made within the Cabinet,' Patrascanu believed. Memorandum of conversation. Mark Ethridge and Lucretiu Patrascanu, Bucharest, November 22, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *The Ethridge Mission in Romania*, p. 315.

³⁶ Memorandum of conversation, Mark Ethridge and Iuliu Maniu, Bucharest, November 23, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania*, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 327-328.

³⁷ Although the other leader of the opposition, C. Dinu Bratianu, shared apparently Maniu's convictions he had learnt that the Allies would not go to war for Romania's sake. On 31 May 1945, Bratianu met Burton Y. Berry, the chief of the American military mission, and C.V. Schuyler. The last one had been told in Washington on 11 May that the United States could not endanger its good relations with the Soviet Union just to help the Romanians. C. V. Schuyler, *Misiunea dificila*, p. 104.

³⁸ Memorandum of conversation, Mark Ethridge and Iuliu Maniu, Bucharest, November 23, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *The Ethridge Mission in Romania*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 323.

³⁹ Memorandum prepared by the President of the National Liberal Party during Ethridge's visit in Bucharest. Enclosure to Despatch no. 648 from the United States Mission, Bucharest, December 8, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *The Ethridge Mission in Romania*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 379.

In his report, the American envoy concluded that Groza government was 'in no sense representative under the Yalta formula because the two political groups which had the support of the vast majority of the Romanian people were excluded from the Government, their leaders are being harassed, their local political chapter absorbed, the newspapers entirely suppressed and all public meetings of the opposition barred.' To the difficulties arising from the repressive actions of the Government were added the presence of a large Soviet garrison that was fed, clothed and paid largely at Romanian expense. The American envoy advised firm action: 'Unless we can take firm and effective action in Romania it will soon be too late. We are jeopardizing the confidence of the Romanian people in our intent and ability to carry out commitments we have made to the world.'⁴⁰

The political situation in Romania was addressed at the Moscow conference of Foreign Ministers held between 16 and 26 December 1945. The Soviets maintained that a change of government in Romania would lead to turmoil. They would not allow this to happen at the border of the Soviet Union. The Anglo-Americans agreed eventually to recognize the Romanian government once it was broadened by the inclusion of two Ministers, representing the two opposition parties. As well, free universal and secret elections had to be held as soon as possible, and all democratic parties must have the right to participate in the elections and nominate candidates. The Romanian government meanwhile should work to protect the freedom of the press, free speech, freedom of religion and of association. When these conditions were fulfilled, Britain and the United States pledged to recognize the Groza government.⁴¹ Moscow agreed to these requests and sent Vishinski to Bucharest to ensure the fulfilment of the resolution. He was joined by Clark Kerr and Harriman.

⁴⁰ Despatch of Mark Ethridge to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, 26 November 1945. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1945 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents, 1945]*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 438-440.

⁴¹ Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1946*, 1996, p. 55.

Although the two would be Ministers without Portfolios, Groza fought for the rejection of the nominees of the opposition parties as if it was a matter of life or death. The Liberal leader, Bratianu, was accused of being morally responsible for the bloodshed of 8 November while Mihalache, the vice-president of the Peasant Party, was blamed for 'being responsible for driving Romania into war and volunteering in the campaign against the Soviet Union,' actions which proved his 'undemocratic and fascist views.'⁴² Although the accusations brought against the two nominees were flimsy, Harriman and Clark Kerr gave up at the end of one week of negotiations. Two other candidates were nominated by the NLP and NPP.⁴³ In fact they would be excluded from all important governmental debates and decisions.

Leaving Bucharest, Vishinski declared that he had never left Romania with such a light heart.⁴⁴ He ensured that the Moscow resolution would be applied the way the Soviet wanted not allowing any prominent political figure to be included in the cabinet.⁴⁵

Although Britain's and the United States' envoys gave publicly formal assurances that they guaranteed the application of the Moscow agreement, Harriman advised Maniu privately that he should try to get closer to the Soviet Union since Romania was inescapably under Soviet influence. Clark Kerr, the British Ambassador in Moscow, was convinced that Groza would never acquiesce to Anglo-American demands, or comply with

⁴² In fact, although Ion Mihalache, Vice President of the NPP, had emphatically declared in 1941 that he would rather sign up than accept any position in Antonescu's government, he was subject to conscription; thus he could not volunteer. Report by Averrel Harriman and Burton Y Berry, 6 January 1946. *Romania in the antechamber of the Peace conference of Paris. Documents*, p. 35. Clark Kerr to Bevin, Moscow, 25 January 1946, FO 371/59131, 114406 in Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea Romaniei. Perceptii anglo-american (1944-1947) [Sovietization of Romania. Anglo-American Perceptions (1944-1947)*, Bucharest, 1993, p. 169. Dorin-Liviu Batfoi, *Petru Groza, ultimul burghez. O biografie [Petru Groza, the Last Bourgeois. A Biography]*, Bucharest, 2004, p. 348.

⁴³ Mihail Romniceanu and Emil Hatieganu were 'expected to collaborate loyally' with the government. "Chronicle of Home Affairs," *Rumanian Review*, no. 1/1946, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁴ Dorin-Liviu Batfoi, *Petru Groza, ultimul burghez. O biografie [Petru Groza, the Last Bourgeois. A Biography]*, Bucharest, 2004, p. 353.

⁴⁵ "The Record of Soviet Interference in Rumanian Affairs," OJR Report no. 4456, Department of State, Division of Research for Europe, Office of Intelligence Research, July 18, 1947, *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente [Romania in the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents]*, Bucharest, Arhivele Nationale ale Romaniei, 1996, p. 457

the agreement since he was just a docile performer of Stalin's orders and governed Romania as if it were a Russian province.⁴⁶ On the basis of the formal and superficial assurances assumed by Groza, often referenced later, Britain and the United States officially recognized the Groza government on 6 February 1946. Prominent front page articles were dedicated by Romanian newspapers to recognition. The Communist official *Scanteia* printed the communiqué of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, announcing in the headline that the government was recognized, but ignoring in its coverage the very essence of the British and American communications of 5 February 1946.⁴⁷

Six months of crisis resolved in a minor political change that did not alter the essence of the government. It remained Soviet in creation and communist in inspiration. Such was the government that was expected to hold free elections and ensure democratic rights. The attempt to implement the Potsdam Decision in Romania had actually been thwarted by the Moscow Decision. The important positions of Justice and Interior continued to be controlled by Communists and the government's program remained that of 6 March with certain amendments. More than an attempt to solve a political crisis, the Moscow agreement was an unhappy compromise. Britain and the United States agreed to the Soviet point of view on resolving the Romanian political crisis by the enlargement of the government with two members of the opposition appointed ministries without portfolios.

⁴⁶ Clark Kerr to Bevin, Moscow, 25 January 1946, FO 371/59131, 114406; FO 371/67233, f. 2 cited by Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu and Adrian Pop, *Sovietizarea României. Percepții anglo-americane (1944-1947) [Sovietization of Romania. Anglo-American Perceptions (1944-1947)]*, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 163-178.

⁴⁷ On 5 February 1946 the British and American representatives submitted to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs notes by which their governments declared their readiness to recognize the Romanian government. The government was expected to appoint representatives to Washington and London. A.P. Samson, "Chronicle of Home Affairs," *Rumanian Review*, no. 1/1946, p. 20.

On the basis of Groza's commitment to observe democratic liberties, Britain and the United States recognized the government. The American Department of State was however aware that although the Soviets continued to maintain the fiction of Romanian independence, they 'were pursuing independent aims in Romania, with the general purpose of influencing Romanian political and economic developments in a direction favourable to the U.S.S.R. without regard to the interests of the other Allies or of the Romanians.'⁴⁸

In keeping with the agreement, an election followed, and during the summer febrile election campaigning took place in Romania. Every political organization chose an electoral emblem. That of the Bloc of the Democratic Parties, formed on 17 May 1946, an umbrella for the Communist Party, was the sun.⁴⁹ The Bloc's slogan as weird as it sounded, 'vote the sun!' was made visible on buildings, trams and train carriages, and even printed on packs of matches. The Communists also initiated a campaign to discredit their opponents. The peasants who were granted small holdings in the agrarian reform the year before were advised to vote for the Bloc, otherwise the great landowners belonging to the opposition would claim their land back. 'You preserve your land by voting the Sun!' read the leaflets of the Bloc,⁵⁰ while the opposition's leaflets announced that 'a vote for Groza is a brick for a kolkhoz' and urged the peasants vote for 'Nation and the King.' Otherwise, after the elections the government would take back the peasants' land by incorporating it

⁴⁸ OJR Report no. 4456, "The Record of Soviet Interference in Rumanian Affairs," 18 July 1947, Department of State, Division of research for Europe, Office of Intelligence Research. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente [Romania in the antechamber of Peace Conference. Documents]*, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 448-9.

⁴⁹ The Bloc included besides the Communist Party, a faction of the Social Democratic Party led by Radaceanu, a faction of the National Liberal Party led by Tatarescu, a faction of the National Peasant Party led by Anton Alexandrescu, the Ploughmen's Front led by Groza and the National Popular Party (the former Patriots' Union). Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1946*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 41.

⁵⁰ Among the first measures adopted by Groza government was the agrarian reform of 23 March 1945. The distribution of property certificates to peasants was postponed until autumn in order in a search for political advantage. Gheorghe Onisoru, *Instaurarea regimului communist in Romania [The establishment of the Communist regime in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 84-85; Ioan Scutu (ed.), *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1946*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 42.

into kolkhoz.⁵¹ The other theme besides collectivization was deportation to the Soviet Union which should be expected if the Communists won.⁵²

From the publication of the electoral law violations of the promised freedoms increased day by day. Prominent members of the National Peasant and National Liberal Party were attacked by armed bands, while the Government's reaction was to accuse the leaders of the opposition of subversive activities. Members of the leadership of the NPP and NLP were arrested. Bratianu was placed under house arrest. People taking part in meetings convened by the opposition were attacked by paramilitaries transported in official vehicles.⁵³

The massive scale of repression stood in contrast to the political freedom proclaimed by Groza. The British and the Americans delivered notes of protest on 27 May and 14 June respectively. Although the notes were released to the press, the censor forbade their appearance. The government admitted that political violence 'sometimes' occurred but it was the result of the campaign of 'agitation and hatred' undertaken by the opposition parties against the government. The authorities had done nothing than 'tempering these manifestations and maintain the calm and public order.'⁵⁴

The application of the principle of free elections was however incompatible with what the Soviet Union conceived to be its security interests. As in Poland and East Germany, the Soviet Union used its influence over Romania to compensate for the

⁵¹ Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania's destiny. 1918-1954]*, 2006, pp. 262-263.

⁵² Gheorghe Onisoru, *Instaurarea regimului comunist in Romania*, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 105-107.

⁵³ Members of the opposition parties were beaten by Communist thugs armed with iron pipes with heads resembling medieval maces.. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 367 and 451-5.

⁵⁴ Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. Political Life in Documents. 1946*, pp. 227-229, 247 and 261-263; Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 433-436; Dumitru Sandru, "Conferinta de la Moscova din decembrie 1945 si impactul ei asupra Romaniei" [The Moscow conference of December 1945 and its impact on Romania], *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, 3-4/2003, p. 28.

weakness of the local Communist party. There was an increased Soviet activity in military field with an influx of military airplanes and troop movements in that period.⁵⁵

While the Romanian Government accused certain employees of the American mission of taking part in 'reactionary' plots,⁵⁶ the Soviets ousted journalists who reported about Soviet intrusion in Romania's political life. A correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, Reuben H. Markham, who wrote about the disturbances created by Soviet soldiers at political meetings, was accused by the Soviet representative in ACC, General Susaikov, of showing a 'hostile attitude' to the Red Army stationed in Romania and ordered to leave the country.⁵⁷ Although the chief of the American military representation in the ACC, General Schuyler, protested the Soviets refused to rescind the expulsion order against Markham.⁵⁸ Every foreign news correspondent accredited to Romania was obliged to be supportive of the Groza regime or remain silent.

In contravention of the facts and common sense, the government claimed that it was following the recommendations of the Moscow conference. Political meetings were 'held more and more frequently throughout the country' and 'all the political parties enjoy freedom of [the] press as proved by the appearance of new dailies, the columns of which display abundance of polemics.'⁵⁹ It was in the interest of most Romanians that political meetings be controlled since they proved to be just 'occasions for clashes between extremists,' Groza maintained. He invoked the necessity of maintaining order as the main

⁵⁵ Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 435.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

⁵⁷ Markham had attended conferences and meetings organized by the National Peasant Party [NPP] and sent subsequently his reports to Washington. He also served as link between the NPP and the British and American missions. Romanian Intelligence Service, Report on the activity of the NPP between 10 March and 15 April 1946. *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1946 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1946]*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 159 and 162.

⁵⁸ General Susaikov refused to consider Schuyler's protest against Markham's expulsion; Susaikov stated that Markham had shown a hostile attitude to the Red Army and mingled in party politics. WO 204/10527, f. 14. ACC Romania, 23 May 1946.

Markham departed on 23 June for Greece. WO 204/10527, ff. 20 and 23, ACC Romania, US, Schuyler, 22 and 25 June 1946. Markham's experience formed the subject of his book published in Boston in 1949, *Rumania under the Soviet Yoke*. Berry had also mentioned the incident in his diary. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 441.

⁵⁹ A.P. Samson, "Chronicle of Home Affairs," *Rumanian Review*, no. 1/1946, p. 17.

reason for the restrictions infringing the freedom of assembly. There was a difference between the Anglo-American and the Russian views concerning the elections, Groza admitted. The difference consisted in the fact that the first conceived them as they were held in Britain or America, whereas Russians had in mind the Russian model. The role of the Soviet Army was to ensure that the elections would be 'free and unfettered.'⁶⁰

While the State broadcasting service transmitted continuously the Government's propaganda, opposition publications were hampered by censorship.⁶¹ Admitting that broadcasting facilities were available only to persons with official responsibilities in the performance of their governmental or administrative duties, Groza referred to the necessity of preserving public order and security.⁶² These equivocations and outright lies caused the frustrated American representative to the ACC, Burton Berry, to suggest to the Department of State that the opposition should be given time on the Voice of America.⁶³

Seeking to ensure some element of democratic practice, opposition leaders requested that official observers be sent to Romania during the campaign and on the election day. If the Communist won the elections by fraud, Romania's political future would be in danger. The new parliament would vote for the removal of the monarchy and for the country's inclusion within the Soviet Union, Maniu maintained. He was so much concerned with the attacks upon his local party leaders and innocent people taking part in political meetings that he was thinking of withdrawing from the electoral campaign.⁶⁴ 'Those who don't fight, lose the game,' Berry replied, to his misgivings.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Berry's meeting with Groza, 23 August 1946. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 459-460.

⁶¹ Mihail Romniceanu, *Zece luni in guvernul Groza [Ten months in Groza government]*, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 103-107.

⁶² Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 422.

⁶³ The Soviet government was sensitive to 'public criticism and the threat of force, Berry also pointed out. 'Top Secret' Report upon Romania, September 1946. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 470-1.

⁶⁴ The fact that the elections in Greece were recognized by the American and British governments in spite of not being free and regardless of the great number of abstentions, created a very dangerous

Berry urged the American government to adopt a prompt reaction to give 'courage and strength' to the Romanian democratic leaders. Economic leverage might be employed to extract political concessions. The American government should be just as hard as the Soviet in commercial matters, refusing the Romanian government all loans, financial inducements or commercial advantages until the government functioned in a representative, democratic and independent manner.⁶⁶ Letting down the opposition leaders, 'our friends in Eastern Europe' would be like giving the 'coat of whitewash to [the] Groza façade of the Communist Party'. If, on the other hand, we are going to insist on free and unfettered elections for Romania, according to our interpretation of those words, it is important to confirm now to the Romanian representatives in Paris that such is our intention.'⁶⁷

Although Romania was of low priority for Britain, as the British Minister, Adrian Holman told Maniu,⁶⁸ the British continued to join the Americans in sending protests to the Romanian government, reminding it of assurances given by Groza in January 1946. On 28 October, for example, the British and the Americans protested against the irregularities that were occurring in connection with the election preparation and the severe restriction on freedom of expression imposed. They invited the Government to change its attitude and to

precedent, the leaders of the National Peasant Party believed. They inferred that the abstention of the opposition parties would not affect the outcome of the future elections in Romania.

Signs of disapproval with Maniu's policy of resistance at any price and his attachment towards the Anglo-Americans appeared within National Peasant Party. The Vice-President, Mihalache, and his supporters talked about Maniu's 'eternal opposition' and his negativity and debated a reorientation of the party's political line towards reaching an agreement with the Leftist groups. Approaching the Soviets was also envisaged. Maniu himself or a delegate of the party leadership should go Moscow together with a delegate of the National Liberal Party and seek to obtain a more benevolent attitude towards their parties. A delegation should approach Molotov either at the conference of Foreign Ministries or at the Peace conference in Paris. Informative concerning the activity of the NPP between 10 March-15 April. Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. Political Life in Documents. 1946*, pp. 157-158.

⁶⁵ Negotiations and plots. The meeting between Maniu, Berry and Melbourne at the American diplomatic mission, September 1946. RNA, CC of RCP, Collection 147, Dossier 8/1947, vol. 1, f. 2.

⁶⁶ Burton Berry's 'Top Secret' Report upon Romania, September 1946. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 470-1.

⁶⁷ In the Autumn Berry was transferred to Korea. Aware that his departure would be interpreted as the 'American abandonment of democratic cause in Romania,' he requested to return to Romania for the elections and to be transferred after. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 460-461.

⁶⁸ Negotiations and plots. RNA, CC of RCP, Collection 147, Dossier 8/1947, vol. 1, f. 3.

show by its future actions the sincerity of the promises given in January.⁶⁹ ‘All democratic parties should have the same possibility to participate in political activities leading up to elections without discrimination,’ the British note chided.⁷⁰

Continuing to maintain that the fulfilment of the obligations assumed remained the constant purpose of the Romanian government, the Foreign Minister Tatarescu replied to the Anglo-Americans that the Moscow decision was an agreement between the three Allies and pointed out that any act controlling its implementation could not belong to one signatory government.⁷¹ The Romanian government could not therefore accept any ‘imposition dictated’ by a single foreign power, either British or American. Any comments, criticism and recommendations would be understood as attempts to infringe Romania’s sovereignty by interfering in the country’s internal affairs.⁷²

It was evident that the British and American governments could not influence the trend of events in Romania unless joined by the Soviet government although diplomatic protests could not be considered as an infringement of Romanian sovereignty or interference in a matter of domestic jurisdiction. The British continued to press the Government to tolerate freedom of speech, of press and the right of association in the note submitted by Holman to Tatarescu on 16 November 1946.⁷³

The Groza Government continued to respond that the two opposition parties were to blame for the situation. The upcoming election was ‘the first electoral battle for a truly democratic political regime. . . . There had been no true democracy in Romania before, not

⁶⁹ Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, 2000, pp. 411-412 *infra*.

⁷⁰ The government should respect all electoral procedures; votes should be counted in the presence of all parties’ representatives, official reports published immediately in each voting section and election issues be addressed to an independent authority for appeals. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1946*, pp. 374-376; Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania’s fate. 1918-1954]*, Compania, 2006, p. 263.

⁷¹ Reply of the Romanian government following the notes of protest of 28 October. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1946*, pp. 424-425.

⁷² *Romania on the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents*, pp. 327-9; Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. Political Life in Documents, 1946*, p. 43.

⁷³ *Romania on the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents*, pp. 327-9.

even in the strictly formal meaning of the law, and even less with regard to the political morals and practice in everyday life.’⁷⁴ The elections to be held on 19 November 1946 would be different from the previous, Groza asserted. They would be a consultation of the popular will and the electorate would not be misled ‘in order to obtain the greatest possible number of votes or to steal them from the ballot boxes or buy them.’⁷⁵ So Groza promised. In fact, a theft is what transpired.

On 19 November 1946 terror reigned. The opposition voters were denied access to the polls in twelve polling stations in Bucharest. When the ballot boxes in some provincial cities were opened, fighting erupted, and casualties were reported. The techniques used for falsifying the election included depriving about a half of the people eligible to vote of voting cards, permitting multiple voting by government supporters, not allowing scrutinizers from the opposition to be present at the count, and stuffing the ballot boxes before Opposition observers arrived.⁷⁶

Although admitting that certain ‘incidents’ happened in connection with the elections, the government blamed them on the Opposition parties.⁷⁷ A communiqué issued by the Ministry of Interior shortly after election indicated that violence resulted from attacks on polling stations by opposition supporters.⁷⁸ The Minister of the Interior, Teohari Georgescu, confirmed ‘fair voting’, as did ‘some fifty foreign journalists from

⁷⁴ According to the government propaganda, Romania was not a democratic state during the interwar period since ‘the parliament has always been the expression of the government and not the government the emanation of the parliament. Whenever a government was dismissed the parliament was dissolved and the King appointed a new government which organized elections won with overwhelming majority by them.’ *Rumanian Review* 7/November 1946, p. 7.

⁷⁵ Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, 2000, p. 378.

⁷⁶ Report of the American representative, D-1265, Bucharest, November 27, 1946, *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente [Romania in the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents]*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 458.

⁷⁷ Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania's fate. 1918-1954]*, 2006, pp. 263-264.

⁷⁸ “Six Dead in Election Incidents” announced the bulletin issued by the Press Service of the Romanian Legation in Washington, *Romanian News*, 1 December 1946, no. 3, p. 2.

every European country' who came to Romania to cover the elections.⁷⁹ Indeed, forty-six journalists from various European capitals signed a statement claiming that no intimidation (physical or moral) took place during the elections, that there were no complaints regarding the procedure of voting and that the entire process took place in an atmosphere of calm.⁸⁰ However, more than 10,000 complaints and protests were submitted to the American and British Missions the day after the elections. A list containing the names of 60,000 citizens who were not allowed to vote was also submitted.⁸¹

Were the elections an efficient and sufficient tool for establishing democracy?⁸² Certainly, the Declaration of Liberated Territories approved at Yalta by the 'Big Three' guaranteed free elections in Eastern Europe. And undoubtedly, no such elections had been held in Romania. Yet all the protests submitted before the elections did not lead to any change in the practice of the Romanian government. What result could the protests submitted after election possibly have?

⁷⁹ During his visits to London and Paris in July 1946, the Propaganda Minister arranged for a group of journalists to visit Romania during the election period. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, 2000, p. 453. Amongst the journalists that reported free elections was Emil Burre, editor of the French newspaper *L'Ordre*. Ivor Montagu of the *Daily Worker*, London, made a similar statement. Apparently, there were foreign journalists that concluded that 'no physical or moral pressure was brought to bear upon the voters. The ballot was *perfectly secret*.' *Romanian News*, 1 December, 1946, no. 3, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁰ Statement of the press correspondents on the election, published by *Universul*, 21 November 1946, Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania, Viata politica in documente, 1946*, pp. 488-9.

⁸¹ The Americans staff received contradictory instructions from Berry and Schuyler. At noon, Berry ordered his staff to discontinue receiving complaints and protests, while Schuyler directed them to continue receiving the complaints, assessing that he was responsible for monitoring rigorously the elections as the government's representative in the ACC. Telegram of the Soviet Ambassador, Kavtaradze to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, 21 November 1946, Ioan Scurtu, *Romania, Viata politica in documente, 1946*[*Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1946*], pp. 490-1.

⁸² Analysing the case of the elections in Costa Rica, where the government was recognized by the United States despite the fact that the opposition was not permitted to secure more than 25 percent of the votes, the editor of *La Nacion*, Sergio Carbalo, argued that not seek to create a precedent. Romania would not become a first-rate diplomatic dilemma for the United States, concluded the author. "The Romanian Problem" *La Nacion*, 26 November 1946, in *Romania in antecamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente* [*Romania in the antechamber of the Peace Conference of Paris. Documents*], Bucharest, 1996, pp. 336-337.

The Communist dominated Bloc of 'democratic parties' won about eighty percent of the vote, obtaining 347 seats in a 414 seat Parliament.⁸³ The democratic parties all together had only taken seven per cent of the seats in parliament, a fact signalled in the British note of protest which followed.⁸⁴

After its electoral victory, the Government intensified its repression of the opposition. About 2,000 politicians were arrested in March 1947. The opposition did what it could do, which was little. Maniu protested against the abuses of the Government in a memorandum addressed to the Ministry of Interior.⁸⁵ The Independent Social Democratic Party addressed a petition to all socialist parties and democratic nations, pleading the cause of hundreds of Socialists arrested for their political views.⁸⁶ The leader of the National Liberal Party, Bratianu, seeking relief, submitted a memorandum to the King asking him to cease collaboration with the government in protest. While during Antonescu's dictatorship, the Dictator signed all decrees, the laws issued by Groza government bore the King's signature. The King should appeal once again to the Three Signatory powers, Bratianu suggested. He might have believed that this time the King would succeed since the country was to become sovereign once again. The Peace Treaty, concluded in Paris on 10 February

⁸³ The general election held on 19 November 1946 led to the victory of Communists and Communist dominated parties which won 79, 86 per cent of the vote. Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania [The Great Powers and Romania]*, p. 347; *Rumanian Review*, 8-9/January 1947, p. 9.

⁸⁴ To this note of protest referred Professor Savory, a Conservative, representative of the University of Belfast in the House of Commons. The British government's point of view was expressed clearly on 18 December 1946. Telegram sent by the Romanian Legation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 February 1947, RDA, Dossier England, vol.10/1947, no page number.

Christopher Paget Mayhew would later propose a covert 'counter-offensive' propaganda against the Russians. A Foreign Office department had to be formed specifically for that purpose. Lyn Smith, "Covert British Propaganda: The Information Research Department, 1947-77", *Millenium. Journal of International Studies*, (Spring 1980), Vol. 9, No. 1 9.1, pp. 67-83.

⁸⁵ Maniu's memorandum of 20 June 194. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, pp. 177-179.

⁸⁶ The Appeal of the Independent Social Democratic Party, Bucharest, 15 May 1947, *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 156-7.

1947, which officially ended the Armistice period, waited only for Parliamentary ratification to consecrate the sovereignty of the state.⁸⁷

The conclusion of the Peace treaty did not confer the signatory states the right to intervene in Romania's internal affairs as the Romanian government pointed out in the reply to the British who delivered a note of protest for the massive scale of repression.⁸⁸ The government also accused the leaders of the opposition of heinous crimes, including acting as an 'apple of discord' between the Great Powers.⁸⁹

Why was Romania abandoned while Greece and Turkey were assisted? Not long after Truman's speech on 11 March 1947, Maniu reproached Berry that the Americans were doing little to defend democratic values in Romania.⁹⁰ He likewise reproached Holman and Porter at other meetings. Holman exploded: 'What do you want from us, Mr. Maniu, to go to war for Romania?' Porter intervened, evoking the heroic deeds of the anti-Communist Greeks. Maniu should follow in their footsteps and resist firmly, 'the great endeavours being won by fight, not by lamentations.' Had Porter been aware of the danger threatening Maniu and the NPP leadership, he might not have rebuked him so unsympathetically for 'expecting the Western powers to fight for the Romanian opposition.'⁹¹

At the end of July the National Peasant Party was outlawed after the so-called 'Tamadau affair,' when the vice-president of the party, Mihalache, together with other leading members were arrested while waiting for a plane to flee the country. Thousands of

⁸⁷ The memorandum of 20 May 1947. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, pp. 158-160.

⁸⁸ The Romanian government's reply of 25 June 1947 to the British note of protest. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 179-183.

⁸⁹ *Rumanian Review*, 8-9/January 1947, p. 9.

⁹⁰ On 19 March, Dean Acheson, the interim State Secretary, transmitted through Berry that, although the American government did not agree with Groza's policies contrary to the democratic principles, they could not support or encourage a violent overthrow of the government. *Magazin Istoric*, no. 7 (352), July 1996, p. 8; Berry to Secretary of State, 13 March 1947. Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 540-1.

⁹¹ RNA, CC of RCP, Collection 147, Dossier 8/1947, vol. 1, ff. 4-5.

arrests followed.⁹² Maniu's hope for support from the Anglo-Americans even if trouble with the Soviets resulted was utopian.⁹³ Other of his predictions about the political evolution in Romania proved to be very astute.

Although the Groza Government had assumed certain obligations in order to obtain recognition from the other Great Powers, all the previous pledges were disregarded. King Michael's attempt to force a change with his 'royal strike' failed. All appeals of the opposition leaders to the West for help did not change the situation. The notes sent by the British and American governments to the Romanian government stated the obvious but had no effect. Once recognition was conceded, further representations were dismissed as interference in Romania's internal affairs.

Although determined to challenge the supremacy of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, the Attlee and Truman administrations were eventually forced to accept the Soviet predominance over Romania and recognize the Groza government installed with the support of the Soviets. The recognition of the Romanian government on 6 February 1946 and the Peace Treaty signed with Romania on 10 February 1947 consecrated the new regime in Bucharest. Although the Groza government was not representative or democratic within the meaning of the Potsdam decisions, the Council of Foreign Ministers which met in Moscow in December 1945 did not change the substance of the government, Communist in inspiration and subordinate to Soviet interests.

⁹² Claudiu Secasui, "Operatiunea Tamadau (14 iulie 1947). Un document inedit," *Analele Sighet – Caderea Cortinei*, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 558-569; Gheorghe Onisoru, *Instaurarea regimului comunist in Romania*, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 126-167.

⁹³ The likelihood of a conflict between the Soviet and the Anglo-Americans was the subject of many talks within the National Peasant Party. Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. Viata politica in documente, 1946*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 158.

Supporting the Communist Regime?

Some people said that the golden dream of the humankind was Communism and that the dream was almost tangible in Eastern Europe. But they did not want to ask themselves why thousand and thousand people were running away from this dream and why the exodus does not take the other way too. (King Michael)⁹⁴

While the political situation worsened and the Romanian judiciary system focused through a series of political trials on eliminating the leaders of the opposition, a few members of the British Parliament reiterated their favourable views on Romania's *democratic* regime. The Labour MP Leslie J. Solley and the Communist Phil Piratin seemed impressed by the 'complete freedom of speech and action for all democrats' in Romania and pointed out that only carrying on fascist propaganda or indulging in anti-Semitic activities were prohibited.⁹⁵ Ironically the accusation of carrying on fascist propaganda was one the most commonly one used by the regime against political opponents. As Le Rougetel, the British political representative in Bucharest, noted, it was a simply process 'of calling black white'. That way 'a legend is being built up which unless challenged will soon be accepted as epitaph of an independent Romania.' Who was

⁹⁴ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei [Conversations with King Michael of Romania]*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 165.

⁹⁵ 'Rumania from inside,' was the title of a press conference held by L.J. Solley at the International Organisation of journalists in London, on 27 October 1947, upon his return from Romania. He had spent two weeks there as a guest of the Romanian government. Solley also declared for the Jewish Left magazine *New Life* that the Romanian government had been successful in annihilating anti-Semitism. During his visit, Solley was received by King Michael and had meetings with the leader of the National Popular Party, Professor Petre Constantinescu-Iasi, the Secretary-General of the Social-Democratic Party, and the Minister of Education, Stefan Voitec, Ana Pauker, the veteran Communist leader, Achile Saraga of the Peasant-Democratic Party and Mihail Sadoveanu, Speaker of the Romanian Parliament. No leader of the opposition was on his list. RDA, Dossier England, vol. 10, Press communiqué, Romanian Legation in London, September-October 1947, no page number.

supposed to challenge the regime since Eden believed that the British had ‘more important fish to try. And what would be the result of challenging it? Nil.’⁹⁶

The label ‘fascist reactionaries’ was applied to the opponents of the Communist Party and anyone who opposed the policies of the government and was extended to the outside ‘enemy’.⁹⁷ One of the many misrepresentations spread by the government was that the opposition parties were compromised for having accepted as members former members of the Iron Guard.⁹⁸ Recent accounts disclosed that it was the Communist Party who collaborated with former Iron Guard members and even accepted them as members to increase their very low membership.⁹⁹ The Left represented by the Social Democrats was also accused of not adhering to the Communist ideals and not encouraging close relation with the Soviet Union.

By declaring that the ‘counter-revolutionary forces’, assisted by foreign countries had conspired against the Romanian government, Solley, clearly followed the Communist propaganda of the time. Solley and Piratin were not, however, the first supporters of the Communist regime to visit Bucharest, exchanging favourable press for comradely hospitality. A year before, in 1946, John Mack, a Labour MP, had visited Romania following the invitation of Groza government. Assessing that ‘very little is known in England about Groza government’s politics,’ Mack was apparently eager to convey ‘a just and objective idea’ about Romania. For this purpose, he accepted the invitation to visit, which proved to be an ‘exhilarating experience’. Welcomed as a distinguished envoy from Britain, Mack was invited to speak at a meeting organized in his honour in Bucharest. He then spent Easter in the company of the Prime Minister, at the latter’s private residence in Deva. He had repeatedly been told about how ‘gloomy’ Romania’s past had been. Until

⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/48552, 2 April 1945.

⁹⁷ Burton Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 469.

⁹⁸ *Rumanian review*, 6/October 1946, p. 34.

⁹⁹ Ilarion Tiu, *Istoria Miscarii Legionare, 1944-1968*, Targoviste, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2012.

1946, it seemed, the country had lacked a strong and stable government. This might have encouraged Mack to construct a glamorous image of the present.¹⁰⁰ Confident that the Romanians had ‘a strong desire to throw away forever the legacies of the past’ and rebuild the country ‘on a modern base in harmony with the great democracies of the West,’ he was persuaded that the Groza Government would ensure a wide representation for all political forces. In his view, the government was also ‘animated by a sincere desire for friendship with Britain and the Soviet Union.’¹⁰¹ After the November elections, Mack suggested in the House of Commons that the Romanian government be congratulated for its victory. Any such fraternal message, he was informed, was unlikely since the elections had been ‘neither fair, nor free. They had not contributed to the British-Romanian friendship and, consequently, there was no need to congratulate the Romanian government.’¹⁰²

Just before the Romanian elections, another Labour MP had visited Romania. For John Platt-Mills ‘the best criterion for judging whether or not a regime is good’ was to find out how ‘the respective people, its workers, peasants, intellectuals and employees, respond to this regime.’ Although less effusive than Mack in praising the regime, Platt-Mills was certain that ‘the progressive people’ in Britain would view with sympathy the struggle of the Romanian democracy to achieve better living conditions for common people. He took the opportunity to voice an opinion on the reparation issue, discussed at the Paris Peace Conference. The British government conveyed indemnity claims on behalf of the ‘big industrialists’ who invested in Romania. Romania was requested to make compensation for damages caused to property of the Allied countries and to their citizens during the war, the

¹⁰⁰ “Travelling through Romania” and “Mr. John Mack’s visit to Romania,” (19- 28 April 1946) *Rumanian Review*, no. 2, June 1946, pp. 12-16 and p. 46.

¹⁰¹ Reporting on Romanian opposition parties, Mack referred to the ‘reactionary elements’ that tried to stop the government’s structural reforms. John Mack to Clement Atlee, Report on Romania no. 327/1946. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 7/1946, ff. 3-4.

¹⁰² The reply came from Christopher Paget Mayhew, the Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. Telegram sent by the Romanian legation in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 February 1947, RDA, Dossier England, vol.10/1947, no page number.

sum of the compensation being established later.¹⁰³ A distinction had to be made between the damages caused by Romania to invaded territories and the damages which were caused to Romania, Platt-Mills assessed. As far as he knew, Romania ‘never bombed London or New York’. Platt-Mills pinned much importance in his statement on commercial relations between the two countries. ‘To Great Britain it is of great importance to find a market for her manufactured goods and I am quite sure that your ploughmen want our machinery. In a like manner, Great Britain requires the food and timber which has always been found in Romania in plenty.’¹⁰⁴

In the autumn of 1947, an official parliamentary delegation led by Hubert Beaumont, a Labour MP, and including two other Labour MPs, Somerville Hastings and Ernest Popplewell, two Conservatives - Sir Walter Smiles and Colonel Clifton Brown, and a Liberal, Emery Roberts – arrived in Romania at the invitation of the Romanian government.¹⁰⁵ Once the visit was confirmed and the composition of the delegation known, the Romanians decided that other MPs should be invited to Romania ‘so that they may be able to respond to criticism made by the delegation upon their return’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Article 24, paragraph 4 of the Romanian Peace Treaty provided that Romania was responsible for the restoration of properties of the United Nations nationals and where property could not be returned they should receive from the Romanian government compensation in lei ‘to the extent of two-thirds of the sum necessary, at the date of payment, to purchase similar property or to make good the loss suffered’. *Romania in anticamera Conferintei de Pace de la Paris. Documente*, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 462-3.

¹⁰⁴ *Rumanian Review* no. 6/October 1946, pp. 35-36.

¹⁰⁵ The delegation of British MPs arrived in Bucharest on 30 September 1947, two weeks after the cessation of the mission of the Allied Control Commission in Romania. The Visit of the British parliamentary delegation in Romania, RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 4 and *Magazin Istoric*, no. 9 (366), September 1997, p. 90.

¹⁰⁶ Short biographies of the members of the delegation together with Pritt’s opinions were transmitted by the Romanian Legation London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff. 29-30.

Richard Franasovici, the Romanian representative in London, suggested that, besides Solley and Pritt whose friendly feelings towards the Communist regimes were well known, MPs with other political views should be invited in Romania. That would give the impression of an objective appraisal of Romania. Proposal for the visit to Bucharest of a group of British MPs, 8 April 1947, RDA, Dossier England, vol. 18, no page number and RNA, CC of PCR, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 43.

During the summer, the Romanians had unsuccessfully attempted to manoeuvre for the inclusion in the delegation of certain MPs known for their pro-Communist sympathies. The delegation's composition had been decided by Parliament proportional to its membership, they were told. The remaining option was to invite the desired MPs as private guests of the government. On the Romanian list stood Leslie Solley, Phil Piratin, Denis Pritt, John Platt-Mills, Konni Zilliacus, Richard Crossman, and Kingsley Martin, the editor of the left-wing magazine *New Statesman and Nation*.¹⁰⁷ They should support the regime and neutralize a presumptive negative evaluation made by the official delegation.'¹⁰⁸

Of these, 'the most suitable person to rely on' was believed to be Pritt who, as a lawyer, defended the Soviets brought to Court in Canada for espionage.¹⁰⁹ Although an independent MP after a contention with Bevin, he worked 'hand in hand' with Zilliacus and Platt-Mills. While the Romanian government put much hope in Pritt, he declined the invitation. It was not because he was reluctant to endorse the Romanian regime but because at that time he was in Prague supporting that Communist regime under construction there.¹¹⁰ Solley, a cunning person who had previously rendered services to the Romanian government 'with all kinds of information' was also on the list.¹¹¹ Eventually, he and the Communist Piratin accepted the invitation. They managed to get to Bucharest

¹⁰⁷ Labour Party dissidents, Solley, Platt-Mills and Zilliacus favoured a closer relationship with the Soviet Union. Zilliacus had previously visited the Soviet Union to 'collect material' for his political fight in Britain. RNA, CC of PCR, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 9 and Dossier 18/1949.

¹⁰⁸ Visit of the parliamentary delegation in Romania, 30 September-15 October 1947, RNA, CC of PCR, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff. 1-2, Address No. 279/ 30 September 1947.

¹⁰⁹ Igor Gouzenko, a former clerk in the Soviet embassy in Ottawa defected and revealed Soviet spying operations in Canada and the United States. The evidence he smuggled from the embassy led to the arrest of an important number of Soviet spies. Pritt was seemingly defending some of them.

¹¹⁰ Pritt was expelled from the Labour Party in March 1940 after defending the Red Army invasion of Finland. As an independent MP he joined a group of left-wing members in the House of Commons, among them Konni Zilliacus, John Platt-Mills, Leslie Solley, William Gallagher and Phil Piratin. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff.1-2.

Pritt would later become the chairman of the British-Romanian Friendship association, located in London, whose aim was to promote 'friendship and understanding between the British and Romanians.' RDA, Dossier England, vol. 18, 1954, no page number.

¹¹¹ Visit of the parliamentary delegation in Romania, 30 September-15 October 1947, RNA, CC of PCR, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff. 1-2, despatch no. 279/ 30 September 1947.

on the same day as the official delegation and accompanied it everywhere.¹¹² Hubert Beaumont, the chief of the delegation, expressed, upon his return to Britain, his anger at the discourtesy of the Romanian government that had simply attached the two unrepresentative MPs to the delegation.¹¹³

The additions earned whatever hospitality might have been shown them. Accompanying the official delegation, Solley proved to be, as he was in the House of Commons, 'talkative and even quarrelsome,' arguing frequently with the members of the delegation and even accusing them of insulting Romania. Although he was told that the delegation was not interested in his opinion since he was not an accredited member, he replied that as a member of the British Parliament, he could declare whatever he wanted.¹¹⁴ Piratin went even further in his criticisms, accusing the British Government of not spending a penny to help Romania although it had assisted Germany, Austria and Greece.¹¹⁵

As the Romanian government expected, the two did not just work to hamstring the official delegation but also made favourable remarks on the regime on their return and created that way a distorted image for British public opinion of what was actually happening in Romania. Their attitude prompted the Conservative Clifton Brown to assess that the Soviet Union represented not only a huge military potential, but also an 'altar of social beliefs' having its 'fanatic agents' in the House of all capitalist states.'¹¹⁶ King Michael was of the same opinion. 'Stalin had admirers among people with influence on public opinion in the West,' he assessed. 'Philosophers, journalists, poets... while

¹¹² One of the three Communists in the British parliament, Piratin associated in the Parliament with several left-wing Labour MPs, some of whom, after being expelled by their party as crypto-communists, formed the Labour Independent Group.

¹¹³ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff.27-28.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., ff. 2 and 25.

¹¹⁵ Piratin's remark made Sir Walter Smiles reply that although he represented the opposition, he did not and would not attack the Labour government in front of foreigners. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 20.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., f. 14.

applauding the communist experiment they took [for themselves] the best of [what] capitalism' could provide.¹¹⁷ Without knowing how Soviet propaganda could be restrained, Brown was at least certain that the British public was beginning to wake up from the 'illusion that the Left stands for a valid political option. Had the elections been held', by the time the visit occurred, 'the Conservatives would [have] take[n] power.'¹¹⁸

Travelling throughout the country, the delegation had the opportunity of seeing to what extent the Communists had succeeded in establishing control over Romanian society. Criticizing certain measures initiated by the regime such as the financial stabilization implemented in August 1947, Brown assessed that this measure had the purpose of undermining the capitalist basis of the society.¹¹⁹ His colleague, Smiles, criticized the procedure of appointing rather than electing local officials. These would, however, prove to be faithful to the regime which had appointed them.

While visiting Sibiu, a city with a significant German population, Brown, Smiles, and Roberts 'began the attack,' asking how many enterprises had been taken from the Germans and for what reason. The Communist appointed Mayor mentioned that there was a law which decided on the confiscation. That made Smiles retort that the Communist regime had adopted certain measures, it seemed, only to uproot the German population irrespective of its war record.¹²⁰ "Was there any political organization in which Romanians could freely express their political beliefs?" Popplewell asked, approaching Anton

¹¹⁷ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 99.

¹¹⁸ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 14.

¹¹⁹ The currency reform law passed by the government on August 15, 1947 required, under penalty of life imprisonment, that all gold and all foreign currency be handed to the government in return for the new currency. The *leu* was stabilized at the rate of 150 to the dollar. The public had to turn in their old lei at the rate of 20,000 for one new one, but the law set a maximum amount which may be exchanged. A peasant could exchange 5,000,000 old lei, a worker 3,000,000, and others 1,500,000. Eventually, a peasant would recover a total of about \$1.67, a worker \$1.00, and all others fifty cents. Although the old currency beyond this amount was worthless, it had to be exchanged for a receipt. The law wiped out people's savings, creating grave hardship for the population. Since the shortage of consumer goods continued, the regime compelled the peasants to sell their produce at fixed low rates. Wolff, *The Balkans in our Time*, p. 347.

¹²⁰ Smiles advised the Mayor 'to have all the trees around the city cut down,' alluding to his inevitable hangings in the event of a popular revolt. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff. 18-19.

Alexandrescu, a former colleague of Maniu, by then a collaborationist of the regime. Alexandrescu was by then Minister of Cooperation.¹²¹ Why had Alexandrescu agreed to adhere to the Communists and leave the National Peasant Party after twenty years? And what kind of democracy was that in which state officials were forced to resign just because they held a different political view from the official line?¹²² Achile Saraga, an MP accompanying the British delegation, was also a former member of the National Peasant Party.¹²³ The day the Assembly of deputies voted for the exclusion of the NPP from political life, Saraga paid a veritable homage to the Minister of Interior “that discovered the plot orchestrated by the NPP”.¹²⁴

Constantly challenging the officials they met, the British MPs warned them ‘how wrong they were in walking on this line of totalitarian policy.’ Mentioning the story of a naïve girl, unaware of the danger of riding a tiger who ended by being eaten, Smiles pointed to the danger of the misalliance between the Social Democrats and the Communists the result of which could only be the end of the social democracy in Romania.¹²⁵

However emphatic it might have been in some of its criticism, the British parliamentary delegation could do nothing more than condemn certain measures adopted by the Communist regime. They could not even be present at Maniu’s trial, since, as was the case with all the other political trials, the judgement took place behind closed doors. Maniu was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment on 11 November for ‘plotting against

¹²¹ Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania’s destiny. 1918-1954]*, p. 269.

¹²² RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 7.

¹²³ Saraga joined a faction, the so-called Peasant Democratic Party led by Dr. Nicolae Lupu, and was offered the position of Vice-President. Seemingly the Communists were involved in fracturing the NPP to diminish the huge popularity of the main opposition party. Lupu established his faction in January 1946 and engaged immediately in a campaign against the NPP and, especially, against Maniu. The faction joined the Bloc of Democratic Parties and was granted twenty six seats in the Parliament. Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania’s destiny. 1918-1954]*, p. 269; Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1946*, p. 4.

¹²⁴ Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 202.

¹²⁵ Smiles’s story was based on the English poem “There was a young lady from Niger...” RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 21.

the government'. By then he was 76 and the sentence was the equivalent to death.¹²⁶ Several months before, on 29 July 1947 the National Peasant Party was banned from political life on the ground that it was a 'reactionary and fascist' party.¹²⁷ Smiles was too optimistic in believing that the authorities would not refuse entry to the court building because 'if refused, everyone would realize what kind of freedom is that promoted by the Romanian justice.'¹²⁸

The critics displeased Romanian officials who worked to limit the damage. A scheduled visit to Constanta, the major Romanian port on the Black Sea, was cancelled due to 'some changes in the train schedule.' It was more likely, the Britons commented, to keep them away from seeing the numerous Soviet ships loading Romanian goods for the Soviet Union.¹²⁹ Soon after, while the delegation waited to be led to a visit with the Minister of the Interior,¹³⁰ they were told that the audience was cancelled because they had showed a consistently unfriendly attitude towards the Romanian Government during their visit. The brutal tone used by the functionary tasked with conveying this announcement and the gesture itself left the British speechless. The only response, it seemed, was to leave the hotel in which they were staying and ask for refuge in the British Legation for the remaining days. The visit was seemingly leading to a diplomatic incident. Only after long explanations and supplications would the British return to the hotel. The Romanian

¹²⁶ Claudiu Secasui, "Operatiunea Tamadau (14 iulie 1947). Un document inedit," *Analele Sighet – Caderea Cortinei*, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 558-569.

¹²⁷ Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 202.

¹²⁸ Smiles saw in Maniu's trial a reiteration of the Petkov case which took place in Bulgaria. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 19.

The leader of the Agrarian Party in Bulgaria, Nikola Petkov, was arrested on July 24, 1947, and indicted on a charge of treason. In September he was executed. Maniu, the leader of the National Peasant Party, was instead sentenced to life imprisonment. F.S. Northedge, *British Foreign Policy. The process of Readjustment 1945-1961*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, Ruskin House, London, 1962, p. 52.

¹²⁹ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 24-25.

¹³⁰ Roberts, Smiles, Popplewell and Brown insisted upon being received by the Minister of Interior. Their intention was to require information about the number of political prisoners and the prisons in which they were detained after hearing that the number of political prisoners in Romania was over 5,000. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff. 12-15.

parliament could not be made responsible for the government's attitude, the British were told.¹³¹

Overall the visit proved to be a great disappointment for the British delegation which concluded that the only ones with power in Romania were the Communists. The Romanian regime and the Soviet one were similar. 'Being in essence a communist one, the Romanian regime suffers of the same weakness as the Soviet communist regime: mistrust, suspicion and extreme sensitivity.'¹³² Beaumont, the chief of the delegation, who at the beginning of the visit expressed his hope that the visit would contribute to the improvement of relations between Britain and Romania, noted sadly at its end that none of the democratic values such as the freedom of speech, freedom of thinking and of movement were observed in Romania.¹³³

The regime did not react well to even mute criticism. A few weeks after the visit of the British delegation, the Foreign Minister Tatarescu was dismissed for his negligence. An intensive press and radio campaign was launched in the first days of November, demanding an investigation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was 'the solemn obligation of the Government' to the people to eliminate the 'nest of reactionaries and traitors' from the Ministry. The press had insinuated that Tatarescu might have acquiesced with the 'traitorous activities of his subordinates'. On subsequent days the attack was directed against Tatarescu's party.¹³⁴ On 3 November, the Parliament's committee for

¹³¹ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 5 and ff. 26-27.

¹³² Popplewell's assessment. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 27.

¹³³ At the reception offered by the Romanian Inter-Parliamentary Union on 2 October, Beaumont emphasized that 'freedom is indestructible' and cannot be constrained, urging the Romanians to remove the obstacles that impeded people's free movement and trade. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, ff. 7-10.

¹³⁴ 'The rapidity and precision with which the foregoing steps were carried out clearly indicates that the procedure had been carefully planned in advance.' On November 2 a press attack was launched, indirectly, against Tatarescu; few days after, he was charged with criminal negligence. The stage was set for his removal from office. *Poporul [The People]* of 5 November, a government paper, referred to Tatarescu's responsibility for the 'nefarious activity of certain officials of the Ministry' and claimed that the public demanded remedial actions by the government. A lengthy editorial was published in *Semnalul [The Signal]*

foreign affairs adopted a motion of non-confidence. Two days later the Assembly of Deputies convened in an extraordinary session and voted a motion of non-confidence concerning the Minister of Foreign Affairs. On 6 November 1947 all ministers belonging to Tatarescu's Liberal party were dismissed.¹³⁵ Tatarescu himself was replaced by the Communist Ana Pauker. He had been closely watched during the visit of the British MPs and criticised for being too courteous to the chief of the delegation, Beaumont. The private conversation between the two remained an irksome enigma for the Communists.¹³⁶

As revealed later, a plot against Tatarescu had been concocted during the investigation of the NPP's leaders, when it was alleged that high officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been supplying secret information to members of the British and American Legations.¹³⁷ Did Tatarescu expect his dismissal since his name was mentioned during the trial?¹³⁸ Did he talk about his fears to Beaumont? We may never know.

Although not a Communist, Tatarescu helped the Communist Party to carry out the electoral fraud in November 1946. Apparently he had given instructions that the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should vote for the government, warning that sanctions would follow for anyone that did not comply.¹³⁹ Able but unscrupulous, Tatarescu managed to keep on friendly official terms with both the Soviet and the Western powers

of 5 November allegedly revealing the complicity of the Romanian diplomatic service in the so-called 'plot' against the Groza regime. Schoenfeld's report to the Secretary of State, American Legation, Bucharest, 11 November 1947. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 256-257.

¹³⁵ Stelian Neagoe, *Cazul Gheorghe Tatarescu. Plata si rasplata 'tovarasilor de drum*, p. 103.

¹³⁶ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 9/1947, f. 12.

¹³⁷ 'The ostensible excuse for ousting of Tatarescu was 'the revelation of leakage' from the Minister for Foreign Affairs disclosed during the trial of Iuliu Maniu and his associates. Report of Rudolf E. Schoenfeld, the American Legation Bucharest, to the Secretary of State, 11 November 1947. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947*, Arhivele Statului din Romania, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 256-257 and 270.

¹³⁸ There were rumours that the trial of the National Peasant Party leaders would be followed shortly by the trial of Tatarescu and members of his party from the Ministry of Finance. More than the rumours, the changes within government produced panic among entrepreneurs and merchants. Note on political situation during the trial of the National Peasant Party leaders, 8 November 1947. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents]*, 1947, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 255-256.

¹³⁹ Stelian Neagoe, *Cazul Gheorghe Tatarescu. Plata si rasplata 'tovarasilor de drum*, [George Tatarescu's case. *The Payment and the Reward of the Fellow Travellers*], Bucharest, 2003, p. 96.

and ‘clearly endeavoured to give the impression to the latter that he was working to resist the designs of the Communists.’ In his dealings with diplomats representing countries outside the Soviet orbit, Tatarescu was usually ‘quite frank in stating the reasons (Soviet opposition) behind his inability to meet their demands in his capacity as Foreign Minister and quite bland in assurances that were he, a free agent, he would satisfy them immediately’.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Tatarescu did not hesitate to criticize publicly the British and the Americans for protesting against the government’s policies. Seemingly to prove his independence he issued his own critique of the government not very much later. In April 1947 when his Party had reached the point of abstaining to vote for the reorganization of the Ministry of National Economy, Tatarescu told the British Representative that he would have a serious talk with the Communists and was prepared to quit the government on this issue. Although he seemed firm, Tatarescu continued to walk the Communist line, the American representative judged, ‘for he knows full well he cannot withdraw from government, continue to be active in politics and remain free man in Romania.’¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, one month later, in May, Tatarescu underlined the motives that made the government unpopular in an extensive memorandum.¹⁴²

‘Innocent people have been arrested for reasons which had nothing to do with public order’ creating an atmosphere of growing dissatisfaction and even hatred against the government, Tatarescu assessed in his memorandum, pointing out that ‘mass arrests were never and are not even today a barrier against subversive currents. Mass arrests actually led to the recruitment of new elements in the service of turmoil and disorder.’ Although Groza

¹⁴⁰ ‘Despite his lack of political scruples,’ Tatarescu was ‘a man of considerable intelligence and ability.’ Schoenfeld’s report to the Secretary of State, American Legation, Bucharest, November 17, 1947. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 269-270.

¹⁴¹ Burton Y. Berry’s report to the Secretary of State, Bucharest, 12 April 1947. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947 [Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947]*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 150.

¹⁴² Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania’s destiny. 1918-1954]*, p. 272.

promised before the general election to grant amnesty for political offences,¹⁴³ a resurgence of repression followed triggered by the tendency to view 'any unwanted behaviour as a crime, any crime as a political act and any political crime as treason.' The atmosphere of panic, distrust and insecurity paralyzed everything. Uncertainty, preventive arrests, requisitions and abuses created a climate of mistrust, so that no one invested any more in Romania. A growing dissatisfaction was shared by the military, magistracy, professors, peasants and priesthood.¹⁴⁴

The ministers should contemplate the country's image abroad. After the peace treaty ratification, they would request admission into the United Nations, to 'resume the country's place among the free countries of the world and enjoy all the rights and benefits given by the member status of the international organization.' However, Romania's admission depended on the vote of the General Assembly, then composed of fifty five states. 'Would these states vote for Romania's acceptance?'¹⁴⁵

Tatarescu reminded his colleagues that although Romania benefited 'from the unconditional support of the Soviet Union and their friends,' those votes would not represent the majority. The British and the Americans would invoke the observance of the provisions of the peace treaty, particularly Article Three referring to the obligation to grant all the citizens the free exercise of fundamental liberties.¹⁴⁶ A list of fifteen measures was proposed by Tatarescu to improve the operation of the government. Ministers had to revise the country's administration. Those in leading local institutions had to be persons entrusted by the population. Economically, besides stimulating private initiative and limiting state

¹⁴³ Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 442.

¹⁴⁴ Tatarescu's memorandum, 24 May 1947. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 160-164.

¹⁴⁵ On 9 July 1947, a letter was sent to the Secretary General of the United Nations requesting admission into the organization. Other requests would follow in 1948 and 1954. *Romania la Organizatia Natiunilor Unite [Romania at the United Nations]*, Bucharest, 1995, pp. 16-17.

¹⁴⁶ Tatarescu's memorandum, *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 165-6.

intervention, the government should implement a policy of economic parsimony. Monetary stabilization had to be carefully prepared. And the list continued.¹⁴⁷

Seemingly Tatarescu did not have the intention of making the memorandum public. 'It was not my intention to shake the government's stability through a public and passionate discussion of governmental decisions,' Tatarescu would later state from prison, pledging that he would refrain from any further action that 'could make the game of the government's opponents' and giving assurances that the memorandum would not affect the collaboration of his team within the government. By putting forward 'certain suggestions,' he had in mind the consolidation of the administration through the 'review and correction of certain errors, unavoidable errors in any government.'¹⁴⁸

Some thought that Tatarescu was lured by the Soviets into a trap. Before submitting it to his cabinet colleagues, Tatarescu had showed his memorandum to the Soviet Ambassador Kavtaradze and possibly to the ACC Chairman, General Susaikov. Having the Soviet Ambassador's approval, Tatarescu distributed the memo to the Government.¹⁴⁹ That was a mistake. The Memorandum constituted his resignation. He had barely resigned before the press was unleashed with accusations of hypocrisy and betrayal, speaking of him as 'the one of the biggest scoundrel of the Romanian political life.' By collaborating with the Communists, Tatarescu had attracted nothing but contempt. Defamatory articles also appeared against his Foreign Ministry team; a 'ministry of traitors in the service of the Anglo-American imperialists.'¹⁵⁰

The precision with which his resignation was secured, the rapidity of the purge of his adherents from Government office, and the uniformity of the press attacks on

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 166-167.

¹⁴⁸ Apparently, Tatarescu's memo was disclosed by a clerk who typed it. Stelian Neagoe, *Cazul Gheorghe Tatarescu. Plata si rasplata 'tovarasilor de drum, [George Tatarescu's case. The Payment and Reward of the Fellow Travellers]*, p. 150.

¹⁴⁹ He might have counted on Soviet support in exchange for his previous services, Schoenfeld assessed in his report to the Secretary of State, November 17, 1947. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents, 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 270-271.

¹⁵⁰ Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania's destiny. 1918-1954]*, p. 272.

Mr. Tatarescu all show clearly that this demarche was prepared long in advance and was put into action when a favourable moment arose. The purge of Dissident Liberals from all phases of public life is still continuing and extends down to the most petty office holders in the provincial, municipal, and central governments. The press for November 16 announced the dismissal of all Dissident Liberal deputies from offices in parliamentary committees although the ultimate fate of the deputies themselves is still unknown.¹⁵¹

Displaced from the leadership of the Foreign Ministry on 6 November 1947,¹⁵²

Tatarescu was arrested three years later, on the night of 5/6 May 1950, together with other politicians, and held in the notorious Sighet gaol until 1955.¹⁵³ A few days after Tatarescu's downfall, Maniu and Mihalache, the president and vice-president of the party, were sentenced to forced labour for life (subsequently, to life imprisonment), deprivation of civil rights and confiscation of all possessions. They were charged with organizing and heading a plot with the aim of forcible overthrowing the government with the support of Anglo-Americans. The trial provided "overwhelming proofs to what had been pursued by the warmongers in maintaining in these parts of the world a vast network of espionage"; it was alleged that Grigore Niculescu-Buzesti and Constantin Visoianu, former Foreign ministers, who succeeded in escaping the country in 1946, organized abroad an espionage network guided by 'the Imperialists' while the leaders of the NPP carried on 'a feverish activity towards overthrowing the democratic regime.' Former high officials from the Foreign Ministry, Alexandru Cretzianu and Niculescu-Buzesti were sentenced to forced

¹⁵¹ Schoenfeld to Secretary of State, November 17, 1947. *Romania. Viata politica in documente. 1947[Romania. The Political Life in Documents]*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 270.

¹⁵² In the aftermath of Tatarescu's removal the personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were denied the access into the building. They would be soon replaced with individuals on criteria of 'healthy' social origin and allegiance to the regime. 268 persons had been hired between November 1947 and March 1948 while 211 (among them 110 diplomats) had been removed. Denis Deletant, *Teroarea comunista in Romania. Gheorghiu-Dej si statul politienesc, 1948-1965*, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 250-252.

¹⁵³ Tatarescu's fate was foreseen by Gen. Sanatescu. In June 1947 he noted in his diary, 'Tatarescu's assessments made sensation by revealing the negative activity of the government during the two years of governing. The statement is a self-criticism, asking for the government program appraisal. The memoir upset both the Russians and the Communists (indigenous) who had always made false claims that the country goes well. What measures will be taken against Tatarescu? Probably he will be removed from the government and I would not be surprised to see him among the war criminals.' Three years after his resignation, Tatarescu was imprisoned for five years. Released from prison on 6 June 1955, Tatarescu died two years later. Stelian Neagoe, *Cazul Gheorghe Tatarescu. Plata si rasplata 'tovarasilor de drum,'* p. 100 and 336.

labour for life, Grigore Gafencu to twenty years of forced labour, and Visoianu, to fifteen years forced labour.¹⁵⁴

The King and the Queen Mother left Bucharest on 12 November to attend the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Philip Mountbatten.¹⁵⁵ In London, the King had many conversations with high officials. What did they intend to do to help him? Bevin, the Foreign Minister, did not give King Michael any encouragement but advice: not to return to Romania.¹⁵⁶ It was also what the Communists expected.¹⁵⁷ By now they should have had Stalin's agreement for the removal of the monarchy.

The King's reputation was affected by incidents that had taken place during the three years of his reign. While during his 'royal strike', Stalin remarked that 'Kings can be originals, [which is] an extremely rare feature' he was also determined not to act directly against the King and the monarchy.¹⁵⁸ The King was however not just original. By deciding in August 1945 not to sign any of the government's decrees unless Groza resigned, the King made himself the symbol of Romanian national resistance. Even the Communists recognized that. 'The King is now the symbol of the nation and its resistance

¹⁵⁴ "The trial of the National-Peasant leaders," *Rumanian Review*, no. 5-6/1948, pp. 28-31; Henry Prost, *Destinul Romaniei (1918-1954) [Romania's destiny. 1918-1954]*, p. 277.

¹⁵⁵ The communiqué of the Royal House was published by the *Gazette* on 13 November 1947. The Government was notified that the King would be absent from Romania for about twenty days. Eleodor Focsaneanu, *Doua saptamani dramatice din istoria Romaniei. 17-30 Decembrie 1947, [Two dramatic weeks in the history of Romania, 17-30 December 1947]*, p. 141.

¹⁵⁶ Ioan Scurtu, "De la Traiasca Regele la Jos regele" [From *Long live the King* to *Down with the King*], *Magazin istoric*, no. 11/November 1997, p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Before the King's departure for Britain, there were rumours that he would not return to the country. *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 256.

¹⁵⁸ At the beginning of September, a delegation led by Groza went to Moscow for advice. Stalin's remark was in reply to Groza's assessment that they 'don't know how to proceed with this King who had been decorated by the Soviet Presidium with the order of Victory.' Nicolae Ciachir, *Marile Puteri si Romania [The Great Powers and Romania]*, pp. 341-342.

Stalin seems to have decided that the King should remain at power. Memorandum of conversation between Mark Ethridge and the Minister of War, General Rascanu, Bucharest, November 22, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 307-8.

to Communist policies,' Sraer, the Secretary General in the Ministry of the Interior, adding that the Communists did not act without the full assent of the Soviets.¹⁵⁹

To what extent the prolonged royal crisis eroded the King's position is difficult to assess. An event which took place several months after Carol's strike produced considerable public confusion. The day the Anglo-Americans submitted their notes of protest against the Government's abuses, on 27 May 1946, by an unhappy coincidence, the King, at an elaborate ceremony in Constanta, awarded his defiant Prime Minister the Order of 'Faithful Service.' The King had seemingly concurred with granting the award to appease the Soviets, at this juncture angry about a previous manifestation of people's solidarity with him, on 10 May. According to the American representative, Berry, the King committed a political mistake by decorating Groza since his action could to be used for Government electoral purposes since the election was then in progress.¹⁶⁰

After the result of the election was announced, protocol dictated that the King open the parliamentary session. On 1 December 1946 he declared that he was 'happy to be amongst the country's representatives convened together for the first time after a long adjournment of parliamentary life.' The government had actively participated in the consolidation of international peace, pursuing the development of political, economic and cultural relations with Great Britain, the United States, France and all the other peace-loving countries, he maintained. The stress was put however on developing collaboration with the Soviet Union.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, November 27, 1945. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, p. 371.

¹⁶⁰ Although the participants in the manifestation of the 10th of May were sentenced to imprisonment up to three years, Susaikov claimed that the King *should do something* to show his displeasure of the action undertaken by 'disorderly elements'. Tatarescu seems to have suggested that a high decoration be awarded to Groza 'because the Soviets so wished'. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 415-416 and 419.

¹⁶¹ The Royal Message delivered by King Michael at the opening of the works of the Assembly. Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1946*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 45 and 523-5; *Rumanian Review*, 8-9/January 1947, p. 27 and 31.

Although Maniu hoped that the King would not proceed with the opening of the Assembly of Deputies before the ratification of the elections by all the three signatories of the Moscow agreement,¹⁶² the King had obviously decided to do what was necessary to survive, and hope for the best thereafter. Considerable dismay was inevitable. Opposition leaders warned that he had made a grave error. 'This Parliament whose session you open, will eventually vote for a Republic,' Maniu warned.¹⁶³ It did not take too long for the prediction to come true.

The King's options were previously debated by his councillors. There was no chance that the British and the Americans could influence the political situation, the King's personal adviser maintained, recalling that eight notes asking for the fulfilment of the January guarantees had been sent to the Romanian government to no result. The acceptance of the fraudulent election would however affect the King's popularity. It would destroy the last vestiges of the King's ties with his subjects and, ultimately, his reason for being. The King could not be a traitor to himself: he should refuse the result of the elections. Such a firm stance would probably bring the King into open conflict with the Government and the Soviets, and, eventually result in his abdication. But who could guarantee that if the King accepted the results of the election, he would continue to be tolerated by the Soviets? He might be removed anyway as he would lose popular support, the King's Private Secretary maintained, pointing out that by refusing to accept the result of the fraudulent election the King would act in agreement with the will of his people. The Marshal of the Court disagreed with the rest of councillors.¹⁶⁴ If the British and the

¹⁶² Maniu's meetings with Berry, Melbourne, Holman and Porter. 28-29 November 1946. RNA, CC of RCP, Collection 147, Dossier 8/1947, vol. 1, f. 3.

¹⁶³ Florin Constantiniu, "Romania între 1944 și 1989," in Stephen Fischer-Galati, Dinu C. Giurescu, Ioan-Aurel Pop (coord.), *O istorie a Romanilor [A History of the Romanians]*, Cluj-Napoca, 1998, p. 314.

¹⁶⁴ The opposition leaders believed that the King was wrongly advised by the Marshal of the Court and Administrator of the Royal domains, Dimitrie Nigel. Concerned with his son's security, the Queen Mother advised him to adopt a submissive posture. The Marshal of the Court was however blackmailed in advising the King in the same way. As a former member of the Antonescu government, he risked conviction

Americans could not bring about an alteration of the political situation, the King should accept the Government-Soviets' report on the election, he suggested. The King would subsequently have the chance, although a slight one, of re-establishing his popularity; this chance depended, however, on his survival during the Soviet occupation. All of the King's advisers concurred that the acceptance of the fraudulent elections would erode much more the King's popularity and undermine his prestige.¹⁶⁵

The King seemed resigned to accept, as well, the necessary re-orientation of Romania's foreign policy towards its great Eastern neighbour. In a later speech opening a new session of the Assembly, in October 1947, after mentioning the government's endeavours to reorganize the economy and raise the life standard of the working masses, the King mentioned that Romania's foreign policy was based on friendship with the Soviet Union, 'the defender of peace, democracy and peoples' independence'.¹⁶⁶ The new direction was approved by the Communist Party. In November 1947 the newly appointed Foreign Minister, Ana Pauker delivered a speech in which she referred to Romania's 'previous vassalage to Imperialistic quarters and the interests of foreign Big Finance' and underlined that Romania's foreign policy would not be as in the past 'the exclusive appendage of a close cast and a book with seven seals' for the common people.¹⁶⁷

The end of the year was approaching when Groza called the Palace for an appointment with the King for the following day, 30 December. He mentioned 'a family

for war crimes. He had avoided such a fate by becoming the Communists' agent within the Palace. Holman's report to London mentioned by Ioan Scurtu, "De la Traiasca Regele la Jos regele" [From *Long live the King to Down with the King*], *Magazin Istoric*, no. 11 (368), November 1997, p. 16.

Documents from the Russian Archives confirm this hypothesis. On 20 May 1945, General Susaikov indicated to Moscow that Nigel could be used to increase the Government's influence on the King. Tatiana Pokivailova, "Arhivele Rusesti despre Monarhia din Romania [The Russian Archives on the Romania's Monarchy]", *Magazin Istoric*, no. 11 (368), November 1997, p. 19.

¹⁶⁵ The King's personal Secretary, the Marshal of the Court and his personal adviser weigh up the King's options. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, pp. 542-544.

¹⁶⁶ Opening of the Assembly of Deputies, no. 1, meeting of 15 October 1947, pp. 1-2; *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 225-227.

¹⁶⁷ Pauker's speech was delivered on 13 November 1947 to an audience formed by the members of the Cabinet, trade unions delegates and press correspondents. *Rumanian Review*, 5-6/1948, p. 40.

issue.’¹⁶⁸ The King had told his Prime Minister about his intention to marry Ana, princess of Bourbon-Parma whom he had met in London at his cousin’s wedding. As provided by the Constitution, the King needed the approval of the government for the marriage. ‘A family matter’ should mean that Groza would bring up the issue during their meeting, the King assumed.¹⁶⁹ The appointment turned, however, into something else.

Accompanied by Gheorghiu-Dej, the First Secretary of Communist Party, Groza entered the Palace at noon.¹⁷⁰ Gheorghiu-Dej’s unannounced appearance displeased the King.¹⁷¹ His discontent turned immediately into astonishment with Groza’s first words: ‘We came to talk about an amicable divorce.’ After this abrupt beginning, Groza stuttered disparate phrases about the country’s severe situation, the Great Powers that ‘could wait no longer’ and the monarchy itself which was no longer a necessity for Romania since it impeded the country’s ‘democratization’. Then he handed the King a paper, and asked him to sign it right away. Realizing what the paper was, the King protested vociferously.¹⁷² Before such a grave step was taken, it was first necessary to consult the people, he said. There was no time for such subtleties, Groza replied.¹⁷³ He should have a few days respite to consider before signing an Act of Abdication, the King insisted; or, at least one day . . . just a few hours . . . only a few minutes. ‘I do not have a mandate to give you days,’ Gheorghiu-Dej intervened, ‘I have only two hours available. If you sign, you will be remembered in history as having understood the situation, if not, tell me!’ In the end, he

¹⁶⁸ The call and the appointment were included in the plan of measures to be adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party for the removal of the monarchy and the proclamation of republic. *Romania. Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 288.

¹⁶⁹ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 270.

¹⁷⁰ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, ff. 96-97.

¹⁷¹ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 270.

¹⁷² Eleodor Focsaneanu, *Doua saptamani dramatice din istoria Romaniei. 17-30 Decembrie 1947, [Two dramatic weeks from in the history of Romania, 17-30 December 1947]*, pp. 100-103.

¹⁷³ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, pp. 57-58.

allowed the King a short break. 'Why, the heck, not give him a few minutes since it will be the same anyway,' he thought and told the King, 'talk to your advisers!'"¹⁷⁴

The King left the room. The Marshal of the Court and the King's personal secretary, Mircea Ioanitiu, informed him that the Palace links with the exterior had been cut off, the phone connections broken,¹⁷⁵ and the Guard disarmed and replaced by people in the service of the Communists.¹⁷⁶ What was going to happen to her son? the Queen Mother inquired. 'Nothing is going to happen to him', Gheorghiu-Dej maintained placatory. However, she should be aware that the King's fate also depended on her; she should advise him to sign the Act of Abdication. That was 'the only reasonable attitude under the present circumstances.'

The King continued to hesitate. 'How can I admit this without any struggle? People would think that I was a coward because I abdicated without a fight, I surrendered the throne without a fight.' 'But whom do you want to fight with?' Gheorghiu-Dej asked.¹⁷⁷ Groza intervened and said that any delay would just complicate the matter. People could realize that something unusual was happening at the Palace.¹⁷⁸ Eventually, the King yielded. 'He signed it,' Gheorghiu-Dej later commented, 'as one sign a voucher

¹⁷⁴ Gheorghiu-Dej on the King's abdication. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, ff. 96-97.

¹⁷⁵ The King later told a press conference in London, that the Royal Palace had been surrounded by armed detachments, and that Groza and Gheorghiu-Dej informed him that in case he did not resign within the time-limit, the armed communists would follow the instructions already issued by them.. *The Times*, 5 March 1948.

¹⁷⁶ Seemingly, it was the new Minister of National Defence, Emil Bodnaras, who acted decisively for the King's removal. A Moscow's agent, involved in the arrest of Marshal Antonescu's, Bodnaras was appointed Minister of National Defence on 24 December 1947. The decree for his appointment was signed by the King himself. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78614.

¹⁷⁷ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, ff. 96-97.

¹⁷⁸ During his interview with Mircea Ciobanu, the King maintained that Groza told him that they were determined to execute over a thousand students from among those that had been arrested during the year. Groza also added that he was in possession of some private dossiers about the King and, if needed, he would disclose them to the public. Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 59.

to the cafeteria. I took it, blew it dry, folded it and put it into my pocket... It was a peaceful way to take the power.'¹⁷⁹

Smiling, Groza approached the King, asking him to touch the pocket of his coat. He had a pistol inside and he wanted the King to know it. Then he turned to the Queen Mother who had not taken her eyes from her son, and said, 'this is to prevent from happening to me what had happened to Antonescu,' implying that he would have reacted if the King had tried to arrest him.¹⁸⁰

What were the King's intentions? Would he remain, or leave the country? The King, of course, could hardly remain a citizen in the new People's Republic. 'Remaining in Romania would have been like consenting to be their prisoner,' the King believed.¹⁸¹

The Council of Ministers convened immediately after the King's abdication.¹⁸² All the Ministers approved the decision of the Communist Party.¹⁸³ The proclamation issued immediately pointed out that the Romanians had now the liberty of choosing the form of state they wanted. The Assembly of the Deputies opted of course for a Republic.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ In 1964, recalling the circumstances of the King's abdication, Gheorghiu-Dej mentioned a Soviet truck passing by, heading to the Romanian human cord that surrounded the palace and a shootout taking place between the Soviet soldiers and his people. He pointed out that 'the Soviet comrades did not have any role in the King's abdication.' RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, ff. 96-97.

¹⁸⁰ Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, pp. 61-62.

¹⁸¹ The King and his Mother went to the summer residence, the Castle Peles, in Sinaia, to prepare their departure. They left in the evening of 6 January 1948. Mircea Ciobanu, *Convorbiri cu Mihai I al Romaniei*, Bucharest, 1991, pp. 63-64.

¹⁸² Ioan Scurtu, "De la Traiasca Regele la Jos regele" [From *Long live the King* to *Down with the King*], *Magazin istoric*, 11/November 1997, p. 17.

¹⁸³ Only twelve of the eighteen ministers were present. Five of them were Communists (Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Teohari Georgescu and Emil Bodnarus), four Socialists (Stefan Voitec, Lothar Radaceanu, Tudor Ionescu and Teodor Iordachescu) and three members of the Ploughmen Front (Octav Livezeanu, Stanciu Stoian and the Prime Minister). Eleodor Focsaneanu, *Doua saptamani dramatice din istoria Romaniei. 17-30 Decembrie 1947*, [Two dramatic weeks in the history of Romania, 17-30 December 1947], pp. 110-5.

¹⁸⁴ Allegedly 'fiery demonstrations' in favour of a republic had taken place in Bucharest. The Law no. 363 of December 30, 1947 established the distribution of powers until a new Constitution could be produced by a Constitutional Assembly. The Assembly of Deputies would continue to exert legislative power in the meantime, while a presidium consisting of five members elected by the Assembly would have the executive power in state. *Scanteia*, 2 January 1948, p. 1.

At the end of January, the royal family's immunity was removed,¹⁸⁵ their properties confiscated and their citizenship withdrawn.¹⁸⁶

Thereafter, all civil servants were required to take a new oath of allegiance to the Republic.¹⁸⁷ The army was given the utmost attention. Those on leave, and therefore not in garrison to take the oath, had to go to the nearest gendarme's office and take the oath by, the latest, the following day, 31st of December at 12.00 PM. The military Guards of all Royal residences had been displaced and hundreds of career officers were quickly sacked. 'The only ones who remain in the army are the cowards and the fools. I don't know to which group to attach myself,' a captain of the School of artillery noted.¹⁸⁸

A secret protocol of the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance signed with the Soviets in January 1948 aimed at the transformation of the Romanian army into an apparatus to serve Soviet interests.¹⁸⁹ The Romanian army had to become 'a school for communism' and 'a mass organization for the better dissemination of Marxist doctrine', continuing the

¹⁸⁵ Patrascanu submitted to the Assembly a draft to amend certain provisions of the Criminal Code. It was among his latest decisions; the following month he was replaced by Avram Bunaciu who proposed the expropriation of all assets belonging to the Royal family. S. Radulescu-Zoner, D. Buse, B. Marinescu, *Instaurarea Totalitarismului Comunist in Romania [The Establishment of the Communist Totalitarianism in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 296.

¹⁸⁶ Minute of the Council of Ministers' meeting, 22 May 1948. *Magazin istoric*, 11/November 1997, p. 31.

¹⁸⁷ 'I swear to be faithful to the people and defend the People's Republic against its external and internal enemies. I swear to observe the laws of the People's Republic and to safeguard state secrets.' Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 296-7. Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, *Stalinizarea Romaniei. Republica Populara Romana 1948-1950: transformari institutionale [Romania's Stalinization. Romanian People's Republic 1948-1950. Institutional transformations]*, Bucharest, 2005, p. 22.

¹⁸⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Mircea Chiritoiu, "Armata tinuta in frau," *Magazin istoric*, no. 11/November 1997, p. 29.

¹⁸⁹ In November 1945, Mark Ethridge, the envoy of James Byrnes to Romania, reported that the Groza government had produced disarray in the Army. It was a disorganisation 'by communization in order to satisfy the wish and aim of the Allies (Soviets)'. Measures taken included: dismissal from the army of officers who, by their capacity and past actions, had become obstacles, entrusting leading positions in the army to general officers who not only were not professionally capable but who were also compromised by their former activity; introduction in each unit of political commissars following the Soviet model; and the permanent threat of a purge of officers to destroy the morale of any potential opponents. Ulrich Burger, *Misiunea Ethridge in Romania [The Ethridge Mission in Romania]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 372.

political education started in the youth organization and continued after the return of conscripts to civil life in the trade unions.¹⁹⁰

‘The removal of the monarchy constituted an act of violence in the process of the country’s enslavement,’ the King maintained in a press conference held in London. ‘The Romanian government installed and maintained in power by a foreign country . . . utterly unrepresentative . . . violated all the international pledges, falsified the elections, and annihilated the democratic political leaders who enjoyed the people’s confidence.’¹⁹¹ It was however too late for such a declaration to produce any consequence.

Meanwhile, in Romania, an intense campaign began to discredit the fallen dynasty. It focused on presenting the Hohenzollern dynasty as having pursued a foreign policy based on dynastic relations which conflicted with the national interests of the country. The King was portrayed as the country’s biggest capitalist and the royal family as having been involved in ‘scandalous affairs.’¹⁹² Romanians would forget about the monarchy, Groza told the King on 30 December. An order emanating from the Ministry of the Interior ordered the renaming of streets and other public places bearing name of the King or of other Royal family members.¹⁹³ ‘Linked at home with the reactionary and abroad with the imperialistic quarters, the monarchy had collapsed like a castle of playing cards. The Romanian Popular Republic was proclaimed to the satisfaction and joy of the whole people.’¹⁹⁴ Or, at least to the satisfaction of the Communists who had conquered

¹⁹⁰ The Militia (formed by fusion of the police and gendarmerie) was to be used as a ‘potent instrument of class warfare for the repression of class enemies.’ Colonel R.G.Turner, the military attaché at the British Legation in Bucharest believed. FO 371/78614, 4 February 1949. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78614, R2056, 21/2/49, Sarell to McWallings.

¹⁹¹ *The Times*, no. 51021, 5 March 1948.

¹⁹² ‘Heading towards New Achievements,” *Rumanian Review*, 5-6/1948, p. 24.

¹⁹³ King Carol’s Square renamed the Republic Square, Bd. Queen Elizabeth became ‘6 March’ and so on. Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, *Stalinizarea Romaniei. Republica Populara Romana 1948-1950: transformari institutionale*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Heading towards New Achievements,” *Rumanian Review*, 5-6/1948, pp. 24-25.

‘rampart to rampart’ and won ‘the battle with the reactionary forces’.¹⁹⁵ The monarchy represented for the Communists an obstacle on the path of building the ‘popular democracy’ while increasingly becoming the focus of popular opposition to the emerging regime.

All of Romania’s neighbours had already fallen under overt Communist domination.¹⁹⁶ Regardless the extent to which the Groza government was pro-Soviet and dominated by Communists it would have been difficult for everyone to assert that the country was genuinely Communist while the King remained in place, even with reduced powers.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Gheorghiu Dej about the King’s abdication. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, ff. 96-97.

¹⁹⁶ Yugoslavia proclaimed the republic on 29 November 1945. The same month Bulgaria became a communist country. In December 1945 Albania fell under Soviet domination and the following month it became republic. Hungary became republic in January 1946 and Bulgaria on 1 December 1947. Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, *Stalinizarea Romaniei. Republica Populara Romana 1948-1950: transformari institutionale*, 2005, p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ Ion Cristoiu, “Dilema regelui Mihai” [The King’s Michael dilemma], *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 11 (16), 1997, p. 1.

Spies everywhere

‘It was the policy of the Romanian Government
to make life difficult and unpleasant for our
representatives in Bucharest.’¹

Despite the sharp frost, on 30 December 1948, people were treated to a military parade. A demonstration of ‘working masses’ also passed through Victory Square in Bucharest where the large portraits of the leaders of the Communist Party and the Presidium of Grand Assembly were visible from afar.² The festivities were occasioned by the first anniversary of the People’s Republic. In the evening a reception was offered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to all the diplomats.

The British seemed to have forgotten the previous allegations of espionage aired by the Romanian government that autumn and misinterpreted as the end of the ‘studied revolutionary discourtesy’ the fact that they were seated together with senior members of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and separately from the Soviet diplomats.³ True, they were not the only ones targeted. Similar accusations had been launched against the American and Turkish diplomats. In September the American minister Rudolf E. Schoenfeld was handed a note in which it was mentioned that four of his staff ‘had used their position and the immunity they enjoyed in order to carry out espionage against Romania;’ their presence was therefore no longer desirable. The note delivered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred to events in Giurgiu on 6 September 1948. Allegedly,

¹ The Secretary of State to the Romanian Minister in London, 28 February 1949. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2358/1051/37.

² *Scanteia*, no. 1314, 31 December, 1948, p. 1. Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, *Stalinizarea Romaniei. Republica Populara Romana 1948-1950: transformari institutionale*, pp. 19-20.

³ Intelligence Summary no. 24, 15-31 December 1948, pp. 1-3. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78602, 802/18 January 1949.

‘the authorities and civilians’ of the city observed a group of four persons in the neighbourhood of the harbour taking pictures from a car of various installations and sites of which photos must not be taken.’ Arrested, the four persons were released only after their identity was confirmed by Schoenfeld.⁴ The Turkish diplomats were also blamed for ‘systematically carrying on an unlawful activity’ against Romania. It was alleged that the Turkish diplomats fostered the departure of Romanian law offenders to Turkey and utilized them in ‘a slanderous campaign’ against the People’s Republic of Romania.⁵

From the summer of 1948 the Romanians intensified their ‘campaign of vilification against Britain and Ernest Bevin to a point at which it can be properly called planned political warfare,’ the British minister in Bucharest reported. Both the press and the radio conveyed unfavourable comments culled from authentic sources, ‘indulging in misquotation, removal from context and deliberate falsification. Statements like ‘68% of the British population desire co-operation with the USSR’,⁶ or headlines such as ‘London police openly support Fascists’ and ‘London police praised for protecting Fascist meetings’ appeared in various Romanian newspapers.⁷

The BBC proved to be ineffective in this ‘campaign of lies,’⁸ although a Foreign Office department was formed, at Christopher Paget Mayhew’s initiative, specifically designed to counteract this offensive propaganda.⁹ Attacks on life in Britain supplemented broad political articles and radio reports while cartoons ridiculing Bevin and other Western

⁴ “Recall of four U.S. employees,” *Rumanian News*, no. 228, 26 September, 1948, p. 4; “Rumanian people’s republic government’s note addressed to the United States legation,” *Rumanian Review*, October 1948, pp. 19-20.

⁵ “Rumanian people’s republic government’s note addressed to the Bucharest Turkish Embassy,” *Rumanian Review*, October 1948, p. 21.

⁶ *Libertatea* of 3rd July 1948, FO 110/97, PR 632/G, Adrian Holman, British Legation Bucharest, to Ernest Bevin, 27 July 1948.

⁷ *Universul* and *Libertatea* of 6 June 1948. FO 1110/97, PR 632/G, Adrian Holman, British Legation Bucharest, to Ernest Bevin, 27 July 1948.

⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 1110/97, PR 632/632/913 G, D.C. Stapleton, Ministry of Defence, to R. Murray, Information and Research Department, Foreign Office, British Propaganda on Romania, 13 August 1948.

‘We are doing our best to get the BBC over whose overseas programme we have no direct control to trim their sails to the wind.’ (Draft letter from Murray to Ministry of Defence, August 1948.)

⁹ Lyn Smith, “Covert British Propaganda: The Information Research Department, 1947-77”, *Millenium. Journal of International Studies*, (Spring 1980), Vol. 9, No. 1 9.1, pp. 67-83.

leaders were regularly printed in the press. 'Some of the sources which feed this campaign may lie within the Romanian Legation in London in the shape of a press reading staff which is specially briefed to supply ammunition for Bucharest propagandists.' On 9 July, *Viata Sindicala* stated that in Britain, 'Lords, Barons and Counts own immense estates covering thousands of hectares while the workers are being treated as slaves. This tradition is being faithfully respected under the 'Labour' Government.' ¹⁰ A virulent press campaign was carried out in the autumn against the first councillor of the Legation, Charles Robinson, the Commercial Attaché, William Watson, and Colonel William Young. Two members of the American Legation, Henri P. Leverich, first counsellor and Colonel John R. Lowell, the Military Attaché were also targeted as playing a part in a plot against the government. ¹¹

In October and November 1948, twelve Romanian high officials were tried in Bucharest and the press announced emphatically that the court had elucidated the part played by the espionage services of certain imperialistic powers in their attempt to overthrow the government by force. The twelve were found guilty of high treason, espionage and economic sabotage by the Bucharest Military Tribunal. ¹² The first indictment was pronounced against Alexandru Popp, formerly director general at Uzinele de Fier Reșița [The Resita Iron Works]. He was accused of industrial sabotage, part of a vast plan aiming at 'disorganising production, impeding improvement of the economic situation and the consolidation of the democratic regime'. 'Due to a combination of actions attributable to the director general, Popp, a catastrophic decline in production' of 'a third of

¹⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 1110/97, PR 632/G, Adrian Holman, British Legation Bucharest, to Ernest Bevin, 27 July 1948.

¹¹ "Procesul grupului de complotisti, spioni si sabotori. Actul de acuzare, " [The trial of plotters, spies and saboteurs. The Act of Indictment], *Scanteia*, no. 1261, 28 October 1948, pp. 2-5.

¹² The debates of the trial went on between 29 October and 11 November 1948, even on Sundays and legal holidays and often prolonged until late night. Articles such as "The People's Enemies on Trial before the People" were published by the party's newspaper, *Scanteia* [The Spark], presenting the plotting organization which would have conveyed secret information and received instructions from the British and American representatives in Bucharest.

the achievements of the previous years' was registered at Resita. Also cited were explosions that had taken place at the foundry, sub-standard production and delays in paying wages. Popp and 'his band' tried to blame the hold-ups in production at Resita on 'accidents.'¹³

Allegedly, Popp together with the former minister of Industry and Trade, Ioan Bujoi, and the other defendants led a network of agents created with the purpose of collecting state secrets. The network included prominent officials such as the former governor of the National Bank, top personnel from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, the Director General of the oil company 'Astra,' a former Naval Undersecretary of State, the former General Secretary of the Air Ministry, and a few attorneys and lawyers.¹⁴ The network was organized deliberately by Max Auschnitt, it was claimed, the owner of many enterprises and banks, among them The Resita Iron Works, one of the biggest corporations in Romania, and 'his overseas masters, in accordance with directives received from Roy Melbourne, Henri P. Leverich, Charles Robinson, Robert Shea, and other agents of the Imperialists.'¹⁵

Secret military, economic and political information, it was pointed out, was conveyed to the British and Americans. Robinson, Watson and Colonel Young were

¹³ "The Saboteurs," *Scanteia*, 31 October 1948. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 3899/1051/37, British Legation Bucharest to FO, 5 April 1949, annexes.

¹⁴ Alexandru Popp, Ioan Bujoiu, Gheorghe Manu, Nicolae Margineanu, Dimitrie Gheorghiu, Alexandru Bals, Horia Macelariu, Gheorghe Bontila, Nicolae Petrascu, Eugen Teodorescu, Nistor Chioreanu and Max Auschnitt were accused of taking part in organizing and heading subversive, terrorist and insurrectional groups. A committee led by Popp, Bujoiu, Manu, Margineanu, and Gheorghiu led the subversive groups.

Popp, Bujoiu, Manu, Macelariu, Petrescu and Teodorescu were sentenced to life imprisonment. Margineanu was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment, Gheorghiu, Bontila and Ghioreanu to 20 years and Bals to 15 years imprisonment. "Procesul grupului de complotisti, spioni si sabotori. Actul de acuzare," [The trial of plotters, spies and saboteurs. The Act of Indictment], *Scanteia*, no. 1261, 28 October 1948, pp. 2-5.

¹⁵ Max Auschnitt (1888-1959) left Romania for the U.S. during the Second World War. He was charged *in absentia* with plotting to overthrow the regime and sentenced to life imprisonment and his properties were confiscated. Besides *Uzinele de Fier*, Auschnitt also owned the metallurgical plant Titan-Nadrag Calan, the Danube metallurgical plant, and was co-owner at 'the Vickers armament factories' and Westminsterbank in London. In the U.S. he was co-owner of the 'American Society of Credit and Investment' and owner of the metallurgical enterprise 'Trading Company for the East' in New York. "Bucharest Espionage Trial," *Rumanian News*, no. 270, 7 November 1948, p. 1.

mentioned repeatedly during the trial. The number of Americans involved was even larger than Britons. Besides Leverich, the First Councillor, and Lowell, the Military Attaché, both declared subsequently *persona non grata*, Roy Melbourne, Robert Shea, Thomas R. Hall, James C. Hamilton, Burton Berry and Donald Dunham were indicated.¹⁶ The information conveyed to the Anglo-Americans was said to be of great variety and consequence: data referring to Romania's military potential including organization, manoeuvres and changes in the garrisons' effective strength, weapons and equipment, aerodromes and buildings, instruction, training camps, special schools for officers and non-commissioned officers, means of locomotion, metallurgical plants and weapon production at 'Astra'; facts and figures on Romania's industrial production (especially petrochemical production but also tractor fabrication), mining and agriculture (income, expenses, taxes, production). Details of the Convention recently concluded with Czechoslovakia were also conveyed. The defendants confessed that they had also submitted, at Melbourne's request, reports on oil production, the requirement for oil equipment, a study on inflation, a report on timber exports, and an assessment of agricultural equipment based on statistical data before and after the agricultural reform.¹⁷

Melbourne's departure from Romania at the end of 1947 did not suspend communication. Leverich who replaced him, continued to maintain contact with the 'conspirators.' Although the vigilant Colonel Lowell was careful to avoid any risks and to maintain secrecy, he continued to request and received data about the Navy, the port Sulina and about prominent political figures. The Americans disposed of two sources who offered regular information about the Soviet operations in Romania: eight sources in the Special Service of the Romanian police, two in the Chief of Staff of the Army and two in the

¹⁶ "The People's Enemies on trial before the People," *Scanteia*, 29 October 1948.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Siguranta [Romanian police]. Hall and Hamilton led the operation of collecting the information, while Charles Hostler was in charge of counter-information.¹⁸

In exchange for the information provided, as agreed by Melbourne and Leverich, the Americans agreed to provide the plotters with armament and technical equipment. These were to be parachuted in certain areas at a convenient date. The plotters also requested financial support. Loans were to be repaid after the removal of the regime. The Romanians pledged to attack weapon depots, bridges and tunnels and occupy public institutions. According to the defendants, the Americans were motivated primarily by the desire to preserve Romania as a market, and to protect their investments. The British were also implicated. Information on the structure and the number of the people involved in the subversive organisations was requested by the British representatives Watson, Young and Robinson.¹⁹ It is impossible to be certain to what extent the British and the Americans involved themselves in the 'conspiracy' but secret organisations evolved throughout the country; they were coordinated by the former General Aurel Aldea and Admiral Horia Macelariu. It is likely that the leaders of the opposition hoped for a support from the Anglo-Americans. People fighting in the mountains were convinced that the 'Americans would come' and waited for their intervention against the Soviet occupation and later against the Communist regime.²⁰

¹⁸ The Americans succeeded in rescuing their agent at the Chief of Staff of the Army, Manicatide, together with his family; hidden in postal bags, they left Romania by an American military plane on 16 October 1946. The operation was the first of a series under the name 'Carola.' The next person rescued was Constantin Visoianu, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, also hidden in the postal bags of the American army, followed by Grigore Niculescu-Buzesti, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, chosen by Maniu to represent the National Peasant Party in exile and Ioana Bujoiu, that served as interpreter for Hall at the later's meetings with the leaders of the movement of resistance. Visoianu and Niculescu-Buzesti were taken to Austria. *Magazin Istoric*, no. 7 (352), July 1996, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹ These subversive organisations were apparently infiltrated by the Romanian police. *Magazin Istoric*, no. 7 (352), July 1996, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ This included organizations such as Haiducii lui Avram Iancu, Divizia Sumanele Negre [The Black Coats] (constituted from former participants in 'Iuliu Maniu' guards), Graiul Sangelui, Grupul Sinaia, Vlad Tepes II and others. *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 9 (14), 1997, pp. 3-4.

In his summation the Prosecutor stressed the connection between the Romanian plotters and members of the British and American Legations.²¹ In view of the ‘disclosures,’ the presence of Robinson and Watson was ‘no longer desired’ and their early recall was requested.²²

On 14 December 1948 the British Legation replied to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicating that, although in accordance with international practice, the British government acceded to the request they ‘must categorically reject the grounds on which the recall had been requested’.²³ ‘The allegations in this trial were most flimsy, the Foreign Office considered; moreover, the documents received by Robinson and Watson had been given to them ‘voluntarily and without payment in the normal course of their duty, some during the Armistice period when we had every right to be fully informed on what was happening in Romania and some later during the Peace Treaty regime, during which Romania has given no evidence whatsoever that it is implementing any of its Treaty obligations.’ Trouble arose from the Romanian government’s practice of not drawing any distinction between ‘the normal diplomatic practice of collecting information and espionage since it considered all information secret.’²⁴

After recalling Robinson and Watson, the British did not take any retaliatory diplomatic actions. In contrast, the Americans, receiving the note in regard to Henri P. Leverich, First counsellor and Colonel John R. Lowell, the Military Attaché, requested

²¹ “Bucharest Espionage Trial,” *Rumanian News*, no. 270, 7 November 1948, p. 4.

²² Robinson and Watson were declared *personae non grata* and asked to leave the country. Note 335 (512/18/48) of the British Legation, Bucharest, 13 December 1948, to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs acknowledging the receipt of the note no. 103.701/CB of the 7 December. RDA, Foreign Diplomats, Dossier 4/Representatives. R 9, William Charles Robinson.

²³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2213/1051/37, FO Memo; FO 371/78608, R 2213/1051/37, 24 February 1949, Brief for the Secretary of State for interview requested by the Romanian Minister – expulsion of members of Romanian Legation from UK.

²⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 825/1051/37. Brief to Parliamentary Question by Earl Howe on 25 January 1949; FO 371/78608, R 1583, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, 8 February 1949, Expulsion of two Romanian diplomats.

immediately that two Romanian representatives, Preoteasa and Lazareanu, be recalled from Washington.²⁵

A man's life was behind the decision to not react to the expulsion of the diplomats. His rescue from Romania was 'far more important than the empty satisfaction of retaliation.'²⁶ And although there was a strong pressure in Parliament for reprisal, any action had been deferred to avoid prejudicing Alexander Evans's chances of leaving Romania.²⁷ Manager of one of recently expropriated British Petroleum companies, 'Steaua Romana' [Romanian Star], Evans disappeared soon after returning from London where he was called for consultation.²⁸ Reaching the Romanian frontier on 8 June 1948, he was detained and taken to an unknown destination.²⁹ Strong representations to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs were met with evasive replies and the British consul was denied visitation until the end of police enquiry.³⁰

The delay in proceedings produced anxiety in London. There was no precedent for a refusal to produce a charge against a British subject and for denying access to him by

²⁵ The US Government retaliated by informing the Romanian Legation at Washington that the presence of two of its members, both with rank of rank of Counsellor and one a special protégé of Ana Pauker, the Romanian Foreign Minister, 'was no longer required.'

²⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2213/1051/37. The Secretary of State decided on 14 December that the British should take retaliatory action but the request for the recall of two Romanian diplomats was postponed until Alexander Evans could be extricated from Romania. The hope that Evans's petition for pardon might be granted before Christmas, proved vain. FO 371/78608, R 136/1051/37 G, FO MINUTE.

²⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 136/1051/37 G. Telegram of 'particular secrecy' to be retained by the authorised recipient and not passed on. Departmental distribution from FO to Bucharest, no 24, 17 January 1949.

The Earl Howe's question referring to the grounds for the request of the Romanian government intended to be addressed in the House of Lords on 18 January was postponed for 25 January. 'In the event of HMG not concurring in it, whether they will take similar action to that reported to have been decided upon by the US Government in a similar case.' FO 371/78608, R 825/1051/37.

TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 604/1462/37, Bucharest telegram no. 47 announced that Evans's projected escape may drag on indefinitely. FO Minute, 20 January 1949. The draft note to the Romanian Minister was to be despatched on January 25 at the latest and the reply to Lord Howe should consist simply of an announcement of the despatch of the Note.

Lord Vansittart's Motion on Romania was postponed until 15 February. Lord Howe's suggestion was put also off to round about that time. W.R. Cox, Private Secretary, to Henderson, 22 January 1949.

²⁸ Evans's call to London might have been in connection with the nationalization decided by the Romanian government and publicized on 11 June 1948.

²⁹ British Information Office, News and London Press Comment, no. 526. 17 June 1948, p.3. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 121, vol. 2, f. 178.

³⁰ Note of the British Legation to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. RDA, Foreign Diplomats, Dossier 4/Repr. R 9, William Charles Robinson.

the British consul, Bevin asserted in the House of Commons. The Romanian authorities 'must be pressed to give Evans the opportunity of clearing himself. The British consul should continue to insist to see Evans immediately.'³¹ When the news about the trial of 'Steaua Romania's managers was made public, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that Evans was arrested.³² The Romanians refused however to admit that they should have notified the British on the charge against Evans.

Brought to court and found guilty of fraud -- on a charge of mal-administering the company's funds -- Evans was sentenced to three years imprisonment.³³ He was placed in Vacaresti Prison in a common cell together with seventy other prisoners. 'No contact with the outside world was permitted; parcels of food, medicine, and clothing only on the rarest exception reached the person for whom intended; questioning proceeded twenty-four hours a day with the prisoners awakened repeatedly during the night for further grilling, and those detained were subject to the crudest forms of torture and were left entirely without adequate food or medical attention.'³⁴ The cell was so crowded that there was barely enough floor space for each to lie down and, when on Legation insistence, a mattress was

³¹ British Information Office, News and London Press Comment, no 526. 17 June 1948, p.3. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 121, vol. 2, f. 178.

³² *Universul* announced that the former managers of 'Steaua Romana,' George Moriatti, Director General, and A. H. Atkins, Administrative Manager, had been sentenced to five years imprisonment each and the pay of fine for disregarding the state provisions concerning the salaries, by paying to certain employees salaries higher than those legally allowed and 'favouring high officials at the expense of workers.' British Information Office, Bennett to Holman, Romanian Press Review 1113, 16 June 1948. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 121, vol. 2, f. 180.

³³ According to Romanians, it was proved that Evans mal-administered the company's funds. He received amounts totalling about 15 million lei from the "Distributia Oil Company" and from "Steaua Romana Oil Company" in October-November 1947 and in March 1948. 'Evans undertook similar operations during the period which preceded the monetary stabilization in August 1947 when he fraudulently obtained sums amounting to about 1 billion and half non-stabilized lei from "Steaua Romana".' *Rumanian News*, no 375, February 20, 1949, p. 4.

³⁴ Roy Melbourne's report of 28 August 1947, Ioan Scurtu (ed.), *Romania. The Political Life in Documents. 1947*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 210.

provided for him, Evans was compelled to refuse it since the width of the mattress would have deprived two prisoners of the space to lie down.³⁵

At the end of January 1949 Evans was released on bail, and eventually left the country with the connivance of the Romanian Government.³⁶ One week after Evans's arrival in Britain, the British government requested the recall of two Romanian diplomats.³⁷ It was the Romanians' turn to declare their astonishment on receiving the British note.³⁸ The Romanian Minister called the Foreign Office for an appointment, requesting explanation for the 'arbitrary measure'.³⁹ Two members of Parliament, Langford-Holt and Denis Pritt, also required explanations for the expulsion.⁴⁰ The Romanian representatives also reacted angrily to an article published by *The People* which underlined Evans's innocence and his maltreatment by the Romanian authorities.⁴¹

³⁵ Evans's report on his prison experience in Romania was included in a memo on the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Romania. FO 371/95003, 1072/5, Draft submission to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, p. 14.

³⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed verbally the British representative that exit and re-entry visas would be issued to Evans and his daughter. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608 Sarell, Bucharest, to FO, 22 January 1949; FO 371/78608, R 825/1051/37, Brief to Parliamentary Question by the Earl Howe on 25 January 1949.

³⁷ 'I do not think it would be advisable to allow the Romanian government to deduce that we have waited for Mr. Evans release before taking action against them. The note to Romanians should be sent a week after Evans's arrival in London.' TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 1361/1051/37 G, FO Minute, H. Bateman to Sir Orme Sargent, 25 January 1949.

The short delay had the purpose of avoiding 'any appearance of a connexion between the two matters.' FO 371/78608, R 2213/1051/37, FO Memo, N.E. Cox, 24 February 1949, Brief for the Secretary of State.

³⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 1361/1051/37 G, note of 7 February 1949 by which the Romanian Legation was notified that the presence in Britain of Eugen Balas, Councillor of the Legation and Jacob Magura, Commercial Secretary are no longer desired. The note also appeared in newspapers. "British Request to Rumania. Recall of Two of Legation Staff", *The Times*, 9 February 1949, p. 8.

The Romanian Minister in London requested to be informed on 'the causes owing to which the presence in Great Britain of Eugen Balas and Jacob Magura was no longer desirable', that would enable him to give complete information to the Romanian government. Note of the Romanian Legation in London, 8 February 1949, TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 1499/1051/37.

³⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2213/1051/37, 24 February 1949, Brief for the Secretary of State for interview requested by the Romanian Minister, referring to the espionage trials staged in October by the Romanian government in which serious allegations were made concerning Robinson and Watson; the allegations were 'baseless and obviously trumped up.'

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 3009/1051/37, Parliamentary question, 14 March 1949. The Minister of State's reply to Langford-Holt of 7 March 1949. Hansard, 7 March 1949, Column 84. FO 371/78608, R 2733/1051/37.

⁴¹ *The People* attempted to 'swindle British public opinion', the daily newspaper of the Romanian Legation, pointed out. *Rumanian News*, 20 February 1949, p. 4.

The recall of two members of the Romanian legation in London produced surprise and embarrassment to the Romanian Minister since there was no motive provided. It would therefore be very difficult for him to explain the situation to Bucharest.⁴² Although reminded of the expulsion of two British diplomats from Bucharest, he refused to draw any parallel between the two cases 'since in Bucharest an open trial had taken place, the evidence had been published, and the public knew exactly the reasons for the recall of Robinson and Watson.' In contrast, the British Government had arrived at the conclusion that the trial was 'a trumped up affair entirely lacking in *bien fonde*. The action taken by the Romanian Government was only one of a series designed to make life difficult and unpleasant for the members of the British Mission in Bucharest.' The British had therefore retaliated against the 'intolerable situation' in the only way open to them.⁴³

Meeting upon the request the British Secretary of State, the Romanian Minister in London insisted that 'nothing that he or his Legation had done had provoked any such course.' Once again he was reminded of the recall of the two British officers which 'could not be justified by what had been produced in Court.' The charges against Robinson and Watson were 'flimsy and the evidence produced most uncertain.' The British could also have made out a valid case for their request, but they 'did not think this called for any such action.' To the complaint that the treatment accorded to the Romanian Legation was unfriendly the Secretary of State replied that the whole behaviour of the Romanian Government towards Britain and its representatives could not be called friendly.⁴⁴ The

⁴² Macovescu, a Romanian counsellor, was told that he must draw his own conclusions, and reminded that the accusation against Robinson and Watson were extremely flimsy, 18 February 1949. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2213/1051/37, FO Memo, Brief for the Secretary of State for interview requested by the Romanian Minister related to the expulsion of members of Romanian Legation.

⁴³ The Romanian Minister was 'nervously querulous' throughout the meeting. Account of a conversation between the Romanian Minister, Macavei, and Bateman regarding the expulsion of Balas and Magura, TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2431/1051/37, 22 February 1949; FO 371/78608, R 2213/1051/37, FO Memo, N.E. Cox, 24 February 1949.

⁴⁴ The Romanian Minister in London was distressed to read about the Note Verbal of 7 February in the press an hour before he received it. The note had been delivered well before hand, the Secretary of State

Romanians continued to protest the expulsion of the diplomats as being 'an entirely arbitrary measure.'⁴⁵ 'It seems that the Romanian Government is bent on having this issue clearly stated before the public,' the British concluded.⁴⁶

In August 1949 another member of the Romanian Legation was considered a candidate for expulsion in reprisal for the expulsion of other British diplomats.⁴⁷ Two members of the British legation in Bucharest, R.F.G. Sarell⁴⁸ and H.S. Marchant,⁴⁹ were involved in an incident in July. Sarell was about to leave Romania, waiting for the entry visa to be granted to his successor, when he was arrested by the Romanian police.⁵⁰

There are two versions on what happened during the night of 25 July. The British referred to the fact that Sarell, by then Charge d' Affaires, was seized by armed men and forcibly abducted to the Bucharest Prefecture of Police. Only on arrival did the men reveal their identity as police officers. In spite of the production of relevant identity documents, the police refused to recognise Sarell's diplomatic status until the arrival of a person from

replied. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2358/1051/37, Expulsion of two members of Romanian legation in London. Account of a conversation between the Secretary of State and N. Macavei, 28 February 1949.

⁴⁵ The Romanian Government continued to assess that they had 'serious reasons and irrefutable evidence and documents which became publicly known during the trial of a group of plotters, spies and saboteurs which took place in Bucharest at the end of October 1948. Robinson and Watson interfered in the internal affairs of Romania, taking an active part in the conspiracies of the group trialled'. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2520/1051/37, Romanian Government's protest against the expulsion of Magura and Balas from Britain, 4 March 1949, London. FO 371/78608, R 3180.

⁴⁶ Foreign Office should inform the House of Commons that the action taken was due to the removal of two British officials, 'whose case we have investigated' finding them innocent of the charges of going outside their proper functions. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 2733/1051/37, FO Minute by Wallinger, 5 March 1949; Parliamentary Question by Langfort-Holt dated 4 March, replied on 7 March. 'The Romanian Government alleged, without justification, that the two members of the British Mission in Bucharest had been engaged in espionage.' The British 'deplored the necessity for the steps taken, but trust that the Romanian Government will realize that the provocative acts to which they have recourse are not conducive to the establishment of good relations.'

⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78608, R 8139/1051/37G, Berman was a candidate for expulsion in reprisal for the expulsion of Sarell, FO Minute, 22 August 1949.

⁴⁸ R.F. G. Sarell was appointed First Secretary to the British Legation in Bucharest in replacement of N. O. W. Steward. Note no. 47 (471/10/46), 23 October 1946, Office of the British Political Representative, Bucharest, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21-Roderick Francis Gibbert Sarell, First Secretary.

⁴⁹ H.S. Marchant was appointed First Secretary in succession to J. S. Bennet. Note of the British Legation, Bucharest, 27 September 19. RDA, Dossier 4/ Repr. M 26 Herbert Stanley Marchant, First Secretary.

⁵⁰ British Legation Bucharest, 26 July 1949, RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21-Roderick Francis Gibbert Sarell, First Secretary.

the Protocol Department of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The later apologised courteously and caused the police authorities to do likewise. The British Legation protested 'at the high handed and violent action of the Bucharest police.'⁵¹ The Romanian version was to some extent different. It claimed that 'a band of blackmarketeers and smugglers' was caught by the police. At their identification, one of them declared that he was a diplomat. Subsequent to verification of the latter's identity with the help of a representative of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the British diplomat was released. Nevertheless, the actions he had engaged in were 'contrary to the diplomatic usages and duties which members of a legation have to fulfil in the country where they are accredited,' the Romanians maintained.

The 'intolerable activity' of Sarell consisted in fact in offering assistance to certain Romanian citizens in their attempt to flee the country. The persons arrested recognized that they aimed at illegally crossing the frontier, their destination being Vienna. The British diplomat allegedly organised their clandestine departure and agreed to keep their jewellery and works of art at the British legation. For this action, the Romanians asked for Sarell's immediate recall.⁵² Marchant's name was also mentioned during the police enquiry and in the note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was implicated in depositing certain valuables at the British Legation.⁵³ The British government rejected the ground on which the Romanian recall was advanced, denying the allegation that Sarell was involved in the activities of a 'band of blackmarketeers and smugglers.'⁵⁴

⁵¹ Note verbal of the British Legation, Bucharest, 26 July 1949. RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- Roderick Francis Gibbert Sarell, First Secretary.

⁵² Note of the Romania's Legation in London, 2 August 1949, RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21.

⁵³ The Note delivered by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the British Legation mentioned that a Romanian citizen admitted during investigation that she had deposited certain valuables, documents and money at the British mission, with the help of Sarell and Marchant. RDA, Dossier England, vol. 10, no page number, R/9017/1054/37.

⁵⁴ Sarell protested to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs against the high-handed behaviour of the policemen that, although aware of his identity when they arrested him, they had behaved arrogantly.

The Romanians' great 'discovery' was something they certainly knew from the beginning since the legation was watched closely: that the trumpeted 'blackmarketeers and smugglers' were actually employees of the British and American Information Offices. Since they could not obtain passports they attempted to depart secretly the country.⁵⁵ The group consisted of Constantin Mugur, the chief of the Romanian staff at the British library, Eleonora Bunea of the *British Press Office*, Nora Samuelli from the *American Press Office*, Annie, her sister, from the *British Press Office*, and Liviu Nasta, a Romanian journalist, correspondent of the *New York Times*. All of them had been arrested, accused of espionage and detained for trial the following year. During the trial, Sarell, Ramsden, Francis Bennet, Ivor Porter, John Bennet and Marchant were 'unmasked' as spies.⁵⁶

With the arrest of the Romanian staff the existence of the Information Centre in Bucharest became uncertain; 'its sphere of interest, already small, must inevitably become yet smaller.'⁵⁷ Compared to the Soviet staff of 500 people, the British Information Office had 35 employees; the French 27 and the United States Information Service [USIS] 15 employees and 8 auxiliaries.⁵⁸

In the autumn of 1949 the British Consulate and the Information Office were brought under one roof. The position of the First Secretary (Information) filled until then by Marchant was cancelled. The Consul assumed the Information Officer's responsibilities

Foreign Office, to Romanian Legation in London, RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- R. F. G. Sarell, First Secretary, 12 August 1949, R 7784/1054/37.

⁵⁵ According to Kirschen, correspondent of the Associated Press in Romania, all these individuals connected with the British and American information services had 'sailed straight into a carefully laid trap whilst trying to escape by illegal means. Since 1948 all these people had been trying to leave the country but as it was impossible to obtain passports, everyone attempted to find a way out on his own.' Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, London, 1963, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Leonard Kirschen, *Detinut al Justitiei Rosii, [Detainee of the Red Justice]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 19 and 23.

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Despatch from the British Legation, Bucharest, 18 October 1949 to the Information Policy Department FO. (A copy of the letter was transmitted to British Council)

⁵⁸ The *Daily Express* published excerpts from the speech delivered at radio by Frank Shea, the head of the American Information Office in Bucharest. RDA, Dossier England, 1947, vol. 18, Telegram of February 7, 1947, no page number; Bogdan Barbu, *Vin americanii! Prezenta simbolica a Statelor Unite in Romania Razboiului Rece [The Americans are coming! The symbolic presence of the United States in Romania during the Cold War]*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2006, pp. 194-5.

except those concerned with press reading, political reporting and the BBC which were to be carried by Chancery.⁵⁹ Sarell and Marchant left Romania, the first recalled, the second transferred to another post in November 1949.⁶⁰ Although recalled, Sarell had to wait for more than one month to obtain not just an exit visa but also an approval for the inventory of his household effects.⁶¹ Comments on the strained relations with Romania appeared in British newspapers. For the Romanian representatives in London the publicity around Sarell's recall had but one single purpose, to justify the forthcoming retaliation.⁶²

In the meantime, the exchange of notes between British and Romanian Foreign Offices continued; the British protesting against the attitude of the Romanian authorities, the Romanians emphasizing that Sarell's involvement in the band of 'blackmarkeeters and smugglers' was confirmed by the testimonies of those arrested and questioned. It was proved that Eleonora Bunea, who worked for the British Information Office, deposited her valuables at the British Legation.⁶³ 'Certainly not', replied the British, denying that Bunea had delivered any valuables to Marchant, Sarell or any other member of the staff. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in answer, submitted to the British legation a letter signed by Bunea together with the Prosecutor's request for the valuables belonging to Bunea and a note of protest against the activities contrary to Romanian laws undertaken by certain

⁵⁹ 'Correspondence should continue to be addressed to the Information Officer as in the past, unless it has particular reference to press reading, political reporting or the BBC when it should be sent to Chancery. TNA, PRO, BW 53/10. Despatch from the British Legation, Bucharest, to the Information Policy Department, FO, 18 October 1949. (A copy of the letter was enclosed for transmission to the British Council.)

⁶⁰ Note of the British Legation no 276 (13/20/49) of 10 November 1949. RDA, Dossier 4/ Repr. M 26, Herbert Stanley Marchant, First Secretary.

⁶¹ Note verbal of the British Legation in Bucharest requesting diplomatic exit visas, 3 August 1949; note of 31 August 1949; request for visa extension for two weeks on the ground that Sarell was unable to leave Romania before 4 September. RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- R. F. G. Sarell, First Secretary.

⁶² Note verbal 2375 D.C.2/ 2 August 1949 addressed to FO; note verbal of the Foreign Office R 7784/1054/37, 12 August 1949, ciphered telegram no. 882 sent by the Romanian Legation in London, 12 August; note sent by the Romanian charge d' Affairs in London to the Minister of Foreign Affairs no. 2388/ DC 2, 15 August 1949, mentioning the article 'Diplomacy under strain' published by *The Economist* on 13 August 1949. RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- R. F. G. Sarell, First Secretary.

⁶³ Note addressed by the Romanian Legation to Foreign Office, 22 August 1949. RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- R. F. G. Sarell, First Secretary.

British diplomats.⁶⁴ Rejecting the charge of illegal activity, the British stated that they could not accept as a true statement the letter of Bunea enclosed in the Romanian Ministry's note, since it was dated after her disappearance and bore 'every sign of having been extorted from her under pressure.' The British note concluded that 'the sole aim of the police authorities was to attempt to discredit this legation.'⁶⁵

As expected, reprisal came soon. Two members of the Romanian Legation were requested to leave London. Drafts for notes of protest to be presented by the Romanian Legation to the Foreign Office were prepared by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, referring to the 'arbitrary measure of reprisal' and pointing out again that Sarell was involved in an illegal incident, which was not the case with the Romanian diplomats in London.⁶⁶ Many reams of paper were squandered to justify, deny, protest and posture.

The recall of the British diplomats and the arrests of the British legation's employees affected the image of the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pauker, the more so since she had previously agreed with the British Minister to inform him whenever a member of the Legation staff would be questioned by the police.⁶⁷ Following a article critical of Pauker published by the *Sunday Express*, the Romanian Minister in London requested an explanation from the Foreign Office.⁶⁸ He was reminded that the press was free in Britain. Although relations between the two governments were strained, the Foreign Office denied responsibility for Pauker's negative image in the British press.

⁶⁴ In her letter dated 29 July 1949 and written both in English and Romanian, Bunea asked Marchant to hand over to the representative of the Romanian authorities the valuables left in his care on 5 June 1949. She also listed the valuables deposited in Woodham's safe, which were to be handed back to her after she has successfully crossed the frontier. Note verbal no. 20002/1949, 14 September 1949. RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- R. F. G. Sarell, First Secretary.

⁶⁵ Note of the British Legation no. 250 (477/26/49), 26 September 1949 with reference to the Romanian Ministry's Note verbal no. 20002/1949 of 14 September. RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- R. F. G. Sarell, First Secretary.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ The British Minister submitted a list of sixty persons working for the legation and requested to be approached on each case in the event that action would be taken against any of them. Among those arrested in 1948 was the driver of the legation, accused of committing a 'serious criminal offense.' British Legation, Bucharest, 11 March 1948. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 11/1948, ff. 14-16.

⁶⁸ Note delivered to Foreign Office, 18 October 1949. RDA, Dossier England, vol. 10.

After two years of harassment and vexation, the closure of the British and American Information Offices did not come unexpectedly. At the beginning of March 1950, Donald Dunham, the chief of the American Office of Information, received a note from the Romanian government demanding the closure of the Press Office and the library. The British were delivered a similar notification on 3 March 1950.⁶⁹ There was nothing they could do, contended the British minister, Walter Roberts, sceptical about the impact which a minute drawn up by the Foreign Office could have on the Romanian government's decision.⁷⁰ An important number of files, among them those relating to local staff, were destroyed.⁷¹ The same happened at the American legation where the Associated Press representative in Bucharest found the United States Information Service [USIS] 'upside down' while 'packing was in full progress.'

A table had been set in the hall for the farewell buffet and in the yard outside smoke was rising from the burning fires. Although not containing secret matter, there was always the fear that if one moved, a case of files might be stolen on the way and if it contained any names of Roumanian nationals, these would be in for needless trouble. In the afternoon when the USIS staff left, the majority were arrested by the Security. The same thing happened at the British library. The remaining few correspondents representing the Western Press, were now waiting anxiously to see what the future held.⁷²

In reprisal, the British requested the cessation of *Rumanian News*, a daily bulletin edited by the Romanian Legation in London.⁷³ While British anger was inevitable, and reprisal could have been safely predicted, official rancour was muted by the fact that the closure of the Information Centre in Bucharest had been considered by London the

⁶⁹ On 3 March the Romanian government demanded the closure of the Information Office. TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, 4 April 1950.

⁷⁰ Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Arthur Barker Limited, London, 1963, p. 11.

⁷¹ The operation had dramatic consequence on the fate of the Romanian staff employed by the British Legation. BW 53/17, File Reference: CF/RU/680/1. Subject: Former Romanian Staff, 2 November 1962.

⁷² Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Arthur Barker Limited, London, 1963, p. 11.

⁷³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/88042, Despatch no. 54, 14 March 1950, mentioned by Stejarel Olaru, "A visit to the Black Sea. Unpublished British diplomatic correspondence (1951)" *Romania and Britain: Relations and Perspectives from 1930 to the present, a British-Romanian Symposium*, New Europe College, Bucharest, 4-5 April 2005, p. 124.

previous autumn for financial reasons.⁷⁴ The small budget covering the wages of the few local employees in the English Library and some other expenses for concerts, film and shows slated for cancellation starting on 1 April 1950. London decided that there was no reason to maintain 'even our present slight degree of activity in Bucharest' in present circumstances.⁷⁵

The Information Office was however closed sooner than the British themselves intended, following the demand of the Romanian government. Budget cuts were thereby 'complete instead of partial.'⁷⁶ The closure endangered the Romanian employees. By being in British service they had incurred the hostility of the Romanian authorities and lived under the constant shadow of arrest.⁷⁷ Two persons were mentioned: Ion Has and Vasile Nicolau, as being recruited in November 1947, who rendered 'able service to the Information Officer . . . They would probably find it very difficult to get other employment, and indeed in present circumstances this might be the least of their difficulties if we discharge them.'⁷⁸

Official paranoia continued to grow. 'Routine practices in the free world became capital offences under the new regime. Statistics usually published in company reports or

⁷⁴ Apparently, the devaluation of the sterling and the need for economies led the Foreign Office to decide to significantly cut the expenditures of the British legations.

⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Despatch from the British Legation, Bucharest, to the Information Policy Department, FO, 18 October 1949; K.R. Johnston to J.P.G. Finch, Cultural Relations Department, FO, 10 November 1949.

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Letter addressed by the Assistant Director of the East European Department of the British Council, E. N. Gummer, to the Information Officer in Bucharest, 23 February 1950; TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Despatch from the Consular Section, British legation, Bucharest, 10 March 1950.

⁷⁷ 'It would be most unfortunate if, in a crisis of this sort, we would have to differentiate between British Council and Foreign Office employees.' TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, J.S.A. Selwyn, British Legation, Consular Section, Bucharest, to E. N. Gummer, Assistant Director, East Europe Department, British Council, London.

⁷⁸ When the East Europe Information Department of the British Council proposed large cuts in Bucharest, the two remained in the service of the Legation (within Marchant's department). TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, K.R. Johnston to J.P.G. Finch, Cultural Relations Department, FO, 10 November 1949; BW 53/10, RU/680/1, on locally-appointed clerks; BW 53/10, E. N. Gummer, Assistant Director, East Europe Department, British Council, London, to the Information Officer, the British Legation, Bucharest, 23 February 1950; BW 53/10, 4 April 1950.

newspapers, and the movement of government and Party personalities were top secret overnight and their disclosure punishable. 'The tempo of arrests, trials, confiscation decrees and death sentences intensified.'⁷⁹ Individuals who frequented the British and American libraries were arrested after being closely monitored by the Securitate.⁸⁰ Romanian employees of Western press agencies were continually shadowed and advised on the 'correctness of a public recantation'. 'Recantation' would involve denunciation of Western press agencies for 'spying against the working class and wrecking their happiness'.⁸¹

Accusations of espionage continued to be lodged against British diplomats. In July 1950, the First Secretary, R. A. King, was charged with espionage after receiving, according to Romanians authorities, an envelope containing secret papers. He was taken into custody and then asked to leave the country.⁸² During the trial of a 'group of spies and traitors in the service of British Intelligence' King was denounced together with the former British representative, Adrian Holman, the former executives of the petrochemical company 'Unirea,' E. Bowden and W. Wilson, and the director of 'Astra,' M. Fitzgerald. While all of them had left Romania before the trial, the Romanian defendants were sentenced to death for high treason. Mihai Romanescu, aviation commander, allegedly recruited as agent in 1946 by E. Bowden, was accused of providing him military information. A shareholder at various companies, Gheorghe Polizu Micsunesti was apparently recruited as spy by a British officer, Tom Hogg, and reactivated by Bowden in 1946. Alexandru Liciu, President of the Court of Appeal, was also accused of espionage.

⁷⁹ Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Arthur Barker Limited, London, 1963, p. 8.

⁸⁰ NCSSA, Documentary Fond of the General Department of State Security, Dossier 121, vol. 2, f. 134; Serban Radulescu-Zoner, "Procesul bibliotecilor engleza si americana", *Anii 1949-1953. Mecanisme de Terorii*, Bucharest, Civic Academy Foundation, 1999, p. 321.

⁸¹ Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, London, 1963, p. 11.

⁸² Although complying with the Romanian request, the charges against King were repudiated. "Britain ordered from Romania. Charge of Spying," *The Times*, 8 July 1950, p. 8.

He was supposedly recruited in 1949 by Gipson, the head of representatives of foreign press in Romania.⁸³

Twenty four alleged 'spies and saboteurs' working in the petrochemical industry were accused of transmitting military information to the British and Americans. During the trial which took place in the oil centre of Ploiesti between 9 and 13 February 1953, Colonel Forster, the Chief of the Economic Department of the British Mission and an engineer at 'Astra company,' Lieutenant Colonel Masterson, from 'Unirea' and Lieutenant Colonel Galpin, from 'Steaua Romana' were 'unmasked as spies'. Enjoying diplomatic immunity as members of the military mission, they had left the country before the trial.⁸⁴ The Romanians indicted were accused of espionage and high treason.⁸⁵ By the time of the trial, Constantin Capsa, Mihail Ciupagea, Constantin Matasaru from 'Steaua Romana' and Aurel Bente had already spent three to four years in prison.⁸⁶ After the nationalization of the oil industry, Capsa, the Chief of Staff at 'Astra-Romana,' and Bente, a technician at the same company, had allegedly organized a network of espionage under Anglo-American

⁸³ Mihai Romanescu, Gheorghe Polizu Micsunesti and Alexander Liciu were arrested in 1950, tried after one year of investigation, between 10 and 14 August 1951, and sentenced to death. Although the documents of the former Securitate did not mention the execution of the sentence, it was likely that the sentences were carried out according to the usual procedure, shot in the yard of the prison Jilava. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 138-139.

⁸⁴ NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 139-140.

⁸⁵ A committee was set up in 1945 with the task of coordinating the espionage network, it was assessed. Four general managers of the companies with British and American capital (Steaua Romana, Romano-Americana, Unirea and Astra Romana) and delegates of the British and American missions had allegedly organized a network of espionage and sabotage with the help of the ex King Mihai and the former opposition parties. "Oil sabotage trial in Rumania. Subsidies from London Espionage Centre," *The Times*, 10 February 1953, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Capsa would have provided information to the British military mission, at the request of Frederic Gartner, director at the same company who succeeded in fleeing the country. An employee of the oil company Astra, Capsa would have been recruited by the British intelligence and led a network composed of seven persons. He was arrested in May 1950 and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Ciupagea, also working at Astra, was accused of being involved in the group of spies and saboteurs in the service of British Intelligence. Arrested in 1950, he was sentenced to twenty five years for crime of high treason. Bente, technician at Astra, was arrested on 9 December 1949 and sentenced to twenty years for high treason. Matasaru, the former director of Steaua Romana [Star Romanian oil company], was arrested in 1949 and sentenced to life imprisonment for high treason. The situation of Romanian citizens convicted for various offenses of whom the British Legation in Bucharest is interested in,' on 26 April 1959. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 6 f. 8 and vol. 7, f. 63 and ff. 101-130.

supervision. Alexandru, the former Minister of Finance and Atanasie Christodulo from 'Romano-Americana' company were also indicted.⁸⁷

Another series of trials 'unmasked' other networks of espionage under British supervision. James Gibson, Commercial Attaché at the British legation, was mentioned in 1953 in connection with a group of 'spies and traitors in the service of British intelligence.' This group led by Petre Gheorghiu, engineer, was allegedly constituted with the purpose of overthrowing the regime by force, with the help of the 'Imperialists.' Gheorghiu was sentenced to life for high treason.⁸⁸ Another team recruiting leader, Ion Bodea, did not benefit from the Court clemency and was sentenced to death for treason. Bodea was allegedly recruited by British Intelligence and trained in Turkey between 1950 and 1953, when he returned illegally to Romania and recruited people for espionage activities until April 1954 when he was caught.⁸⁹

In 1954 the trial of 'the group of spies' led by the former Minister of Justice, Patrascanu, commenced. Accused of being an agent of the former 'bourgeois' police and the British Intelligence, Patrascanu was alleged to have attempted to destroy the Communist Party from the inside. He was also accused of crimes against peace for 'paralyzing' party action against the Imperialists and for having supported Marshall Antonescu in the anti-Soviet war, an absurd accusation. Patrascanu led allegedly a group of conspirators that, with the help of the Anglo-American Intelligence, prepared for the violent overthrow of the regime. He was said to have provided the British and American Intelligence organizations secret information concerning state security. Other Communists

⁸⁷ "Oil sabotage trial in Rumania. Subsidies from London Espionage Centre," *The Times*, 10 February 1953, p. 5.

⁸⁸ Another member of the group, Adrian Soroceanu, an engineer, was sentenced to forced labour for high treason. Allegedly recruited by Gibson in 1948, Soroceanu admitted that he had maintained contact with a diplomatic courier, Harris, and that he was paid for the information he provided. Another member of the group, Pantelimon Gagea, lawyer, was sentenced to eight years for conspiracy against the regime. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 140-141.

⁸⁹ The other members of the group allegedly recruited by Bodea (Cornelia Mihailescu, Irina Muresanu and Ion Matei) were sentenced to life imprisonment. The trial took place between 30 November and 5 December 1954. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 142.

were also accused of crimes against peace for having served as agents of the British and of high treason for providing secret information concerning state security to the British Intelligence and the CIA.⁹⁰

According to Eduard Mark, the American agents Louis E. Madison, Henry L. Roberts and Thomas were briefed between 1944 and 1946 on Soviet policies in Romania by Belu Zilber and Patrascanu.⁹¹ The American Secret Intelligence reports and a letter sent by Edward G. Boxhall, colonel in British Intelligence, reveal the existence of a trend of national communism in Romania. At the beginning of 1946, certain Romanian communists, aware of the danger represented by Soviet economic directives began talking about the establishment of a national Communist party to carry out Romania's interests. These attempts would not be accomplished, Boxhall believed, as long as Ana Pauker was the leader of the Communist party and Bodnarus the chief of the secret police.⁹² Although Zilber and Patrascanu, members of the delegation to the Peace Conference, foresaw the disastrous consequences of the Soviet domination for Romania, they were disappointed with the Western policies as well. Seemingly Patrascanu considered the possibility of becoming a political refugee in the United States, but abandoned the idea because 'the Americans are nuts. They give up to the Russians more than the later demanded and

⁹⁰ Patrascanu was trialled together with Remus Koffler, Herbert (Belu) Zilber, Ion Mocsonyi-Starcea, Alexandru Stefanescu, Jack Berman, Emil Calamanovici, Lena Constante and others. Among the eighty seven witnesses brought to the Court were Ana Toma, the wife of the chief of the General Directorate of the State Security [Directia Generala a Securitatii Statului], Gheorghe Pintilie (Bodnarenko), Ilka Wasserman, manager of the Publishing House 'Cartea Rusa,' [The Russian Book] and Ana Borila, Petre Borila's wife. Borila was Deputy Minister of National Defence. Denis Deletant, *Teroarea comunista in Romania. Gheorghiu-Dej si statul politienesc, 1948-1965*, Bucharest, Polirom, 2001, p. 190.

⁹¹ Eduard Mark, The OSS in Romania, 1944-1945. An Intelligence Operation of the Early Cold War" in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 9 (1994), no. 2, p. 320.

⁹² Raoul Bossy's diary, Hoover Archives. In a note of 15 February 1946 Bossy mentioned the letter received from Boxhall from which he copied a passage. Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, "Modelul Stalinist de sovietizare a Romaniei, II", *Arhivele totalitarismului* 3/1995, Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, Academia Romana, p. 34.

expected. Reaching the United States, the Americans might deliver me to the Russians. I prefer returning at home.’⁹³

It is a fact that the West generally, and Anglo-Americans particularly, had not entirely given up hopes of a regime change and worked with pre-war and wartime contacts, and with irreconcilable anti-Communists to facilitate the change. British Intelligence was involved in supporting an active Romanian anti-communist resistance that persisted until the end of the 1950s. In July 1953, for example, thirteen British and American trained agents were parachuted into Romania to support the resistance groups. Nonetheless, by 1954 certain members of the intelligence began seriously questioning the wisdom of supporting resistance activities behind the Iron Curtain.⁹⁴ Innocent Romanians were sometimes caught up in the search for very real spies and saboteurs.

The Bucharest regime, if it detected these contacts, had been given a new cause for suspicion and in potential a new slate of enemies. The trials generated fear of any connection with the British, genuine or imputed. In its frantic hunting of spies, Romanian authorities seem to have been actually convinced that those working for the British or Americans in any capacity were part of a large network of secret agents.⁹⁵ A reading of the proceedings would lead one to believe that the whole of MI6 worked in Bucharest.⁹⁶ This was not far from what the Romanian leadership believed. In 1951 Gheorghiu-Dej accused

⁹³ Danielopol’s manuscript, Hoover Archives. Ioan Chiper and Florin Constantiniu, “Modelul Stalinist de sovietizare a României,” II, *Arhivele totalitarismului*.3/1995, Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, Academia Romana, p. 34.

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Hazard citing RG 59, Records of the Department of State, Internal Affairs of Romania, 1950-55, Reel 8. Elizabeth W. Hazard, *Cold War crucible: United States foreign policy and the conflict in Romania, 1943-1953*, p. 232.

⁹⁵ Leonard Kirschen *Detinut al Justitiei Rosii [Detainee of the Red Justice]*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 42.

⁹⁶ Maurice Pearton, “British-Romania relations during the 20th century; some reflections,” in *Romania and Britain: Relations and Perspectives from 1930 to the present*, p. 135.

the Western states of transforming their diplomatic missions ‘into teams of spies and conspirators,’ pointing particularly to British and American missions.⁹⁷

In asking for the recall of Western diplomats and accusing them of espionage, the Romanian regime was, however, not original. It just followed what Moscow did in the period.⁹⁸ Seeing foreign agents everywhere, the Romanian government required help from the Soviets in 1949. Despite the presence in Romania of a significant number of NKVD agents, more agents were expected to come and destroy the ‘network of Foreign Intelligence.’⁹⁹ The Soviets did not wait long to oblige. In 1963, the Soviet agents were still there while the Romanian leadership, paranoia abating now worked to send them home.

‘We have an Agency,’ Khrushchev admitted in 1962 during his visit to Romania. ‘Had we not, we would not have known how you comply with CMEA decisions.’¹⁰⁰ What was annoying for the Romanian leadership was that the Soviet Intelligence recruited Romanian citizens.¹⁰¹ The chief of the Soviet network in Romania was, according to Nicolae Ceausescu, Pauker. Until being purged in 1952, she was the ‘brain’ of the communist administration.¹⁰² In inviting the Soviets in to help, the Romanian Government,

⁹⁷ Gheorghiu-Dej’s article “Vigilenta revolutionara a popoarelor in lupta pentru socialism,” [The Nations’ revolutionary vigilance in their struggle for socialism] published by *Pravda*, 4 September 1951 was reedited in *Scanteia*, 6 September 1951.

⁹⁸ A press cut from a Soviet newspaper referred to the seizure in July 1949, of an American spy, Lieutenant Robert Dreyer, deputy naval attaché in Moscow. The fact that the incident involving Sarell took place about the same time, may lead us assume that there was a concerted action of ‘unmasking’ spies.’ RDA, British diplomats, Dossier 4/ Repr. S 21- R. F. G. Sarell, First Secretary.

⁹⁹ Response letter of the Soviet government, 15 November 1949. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 1/1949, ff. 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ The assessment was made during Khrushchev’s visit to Romania during which Nicolae Ceausescu and other leaders of the Romanian Communist Party raised the issue of the Soviet Intelligence, the fact that Romanian officers trained at Moscow were recruited by it, stating that they could not accept the Soviet interference. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossiers 22/1964, f. 68.

¹⁰¹ The Romanian citizens recruited by the Soviets were called by the Romanian authorities and asked firmly to stop their activities. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 44/1963, f. 4.

The network of agents working for the Soviets made possible for the Soviet leaders to compare the data provided by them with that presented by the Romanian representatives at various CMEA meetings. FO 371/177622, NR 103138/15. J.D. Murray to H. F. T. Smith, Foreign Office, 21 May 1964.

¹⁰² RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 44/1963, ff. 75-77.

Certain funds at Pauker’s disposal were seemingly used for espionage or propaganda. On 29 January 1948 she signed a document, authorising the First Counsellor, Ana Toma, to approve expenses from

inadvertently, accentuated Soviet penetration. In fighting Western spies they increased their vulnerability to a real threat, Soviet espionage.

Officially resumed in October 1947, after the ratification of the Peace Treaty, British-Romanian relations saw an involution. Diplomacy was largely reduced to a never ending round of tit for tat expulsions, slander and vilification. Except for the notes of protests effective relations disappeared almost altogether.

state funds for supporting the Zionist movement and the Jewish migration to Israel. This had led to Pauker's dismissal. In that Gheorghiu-Dej was backed by Stalin. Denis Deletant, *Teroarea comunista in Romania. Gheorghiu-Dej si statul politienesc, 1948-1965*, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 250-252.

The Romanian Thaw

‘The Kremlin must indeed be glad to
have so amenable a Satellite.’
(Allen Dudley, British Embassy, Bucharest)¹

On 9 May 1956, for the first time since the Second World War an impressive ceremony was held at the British cemetery in Bucharest, on the anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. The ceremony was attended by a detachment of officers and troops as well as representatives of trade unions. The British Minister, D.F. MacDermot, the Military Attaché, Colonel J.A. Mars, the Air Attaché, Group Captain Joseph S. Kennedy and other members of the British legation took part in the service.² Besides them, were two MPs who had accompanied the Rugby Football team ‘Harlequins’ invited to play two matches in Bucharest.³ One of them, Wavell Wakefield, was also the president of the ‘Harlequins’ Rugby Club, while the other was a former Harlequin player, J.P. Mallalieu. Both enjoyed an ‘unbounded hospitality’. Although as official guests of the government, the two could expect ‘the thickest red-carpet treatment,’ the fact that they were to be accommodated at

¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, N R 1016/19. Allen Dudley, British Embassy, Bucharest to Selwyn Lloyd, 8 November 1956.

² The Council of Ministers, the Presidium of the Great National Assembly, the Ministry of the Armed Forces, the Board of the People Capital and trade unions sent wreaths. *Scanteia*, no. 3591, 10 May 1956, p. 3.

³ A Romanian team played in Britain in 1955. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, NR 1801/11, MacDermot, British Embassy Bucharest, to H.A.H. Hohler, FO, 19 April 1956, on the visit of the ‘Harlequins’ team to Romania.

Romanians had the chance of seeing the best Rugby Football players from England, Wales and Scotland such as C.G. Woodruf, Sandy Sanders, Nick Laburshagne and Micky Grand. *Scanteia*, 9 May 1956, p. 3.

the government guest house was 'an honour unheard of for anybody except high Soviet officials.'⁴

The British guests were also offered the opportunity of visiting 'whatever they wanted' in Romania.⁵ Invited to the mountain resort Sinaia, Wakefield found himself involved in a 'full-scale conference on Anglo-Romanian relations' with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, several of his deputies, the Ministers responsible for Foreign Trade and Sport and other senior officials. The Romanians underlined the importance of bringing the trade discussions then underway in London to a successful conclusion and held out glowing prospects if a trade agreement were concluded.⁶ The government was ready for exchanges of any kind, would consider renewing payment on the legacy national debt and welcomed a British trade delegation to Romania.⁷

The overall friendly attitude enchanted Wakefield to the extent that, although he did not have an official mandate, he expressed his desire to see members of the Romanian government in Britain.⁸ Since Grigore Preoteasa, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, happened to be also the president of the Romanian Rugby Football Federation, he could be invited to London in the later capacity, Wakefield suggested to Foreign Office. This way, British ministers could meet him informally and discuss Romanian debt service. 'What an ingenious Foreign Minister!' remarked the Foreign Office staff, reading Wakefield's report. Although contemplating with amusement the likelihood of seeing Preoteasa in

⁴ Wakefield and his wife received the invitation to visit Romania as official guests. A Labour MP, Mallalieu, also travelled to Romania. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, NR 1801/10. Wakefield to MacDermot, British Minister in Bucharest, 9 April 1956.

⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122709, 1052/2. Wakefield's report on his visit to Romania between 7 and 13 May 1956, p. 3.

⁶ A Romanian delegation left Bucharest in the morning of 14 April with the purpose of concluding a commercial agreement and solving financial problems. The same day Khrushchev and Bulganin left Moscow for London. *Scanteia*, 15 April 1956, p. 1.

The conclusion of any trade arrangement was, according to the British, contingent on a satisfactory settlement of the debts.

⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, NR 1801/13, MacDermot, British Embassy Bucharest, to Selwyn Lloyd, May 17, 1956.

⁸ Though, apparently he was warned in London by Lord John Hope, before leaving, 'on some of the pitfalls'. 'Guidance' to Mallalieu was believed to be unnecessary. [Mallalieu was a Socialist MP]. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, NR 1801/11, FO Minute (Hohler).

Britain 'either in football boots or in striped pants,' their suspicion that the invitation to the 'Harlequins' was a gambit to gain political entry to Britain was confirmed.⁹ The British were, however, reluctant to countenance Preoteasa's visit to London. The Romanian government 'would do all to give the visit a political character', which the British wanted to avoid it.¹⁰

Another initiative was even more astonishing since the regime's repression of Clerics other than those belonging to the Orthodox denomination was widely known. Claiming that the theology of the Orthodox Church was similar to Anglicanism, the Romanians invited Anglican Church representatives to Romania. Wakefield's response to this proposal produced displeasure at the Foreign Office, in large measure because he was in fact supposed to raise the question of detained intelligence operatives. Wakefield decided to leave this sensitive issue to be raised by the clergy 'that would certainly visit Romania'.¹¹ The Romanians were 'so pleasant and hospitable,' that he found it inappropriate to disturb the atmosphere of cordiality 'by raising such a disagreeable subject.'¹² Wakefield may have been unaware that the former Minister in Bucharest, Sir Walter Sullivan, had condemned strongly the Orthodox Clergy for collaborating with the Communist regime and for the forcible incorporation of the Uniate Catholic Church. Thus the Romanian Orthodox Church was 'hardly a more desirable candidate for hospitality than the state to which it was

⁹ 'Our only concern is to prevent international sporting events from being used for the purposes of Communist propaganda,' H.A.F. Hohler, assessed on February 21, 1956. FO 371/122750, NR 1801/5, FO Minute.

¹⁰ There was no likelihood for Preoteasa's visit to Britain even 'disguised as a football fan.' A visit of Preoteasa would bring 'just a lot of unpleasanties.' The fact that Wakefield wanted to take the initiative in this matter, but only submitted his suggestion to the FO two months after returning to Britain made J. E. Ward believe that he had been 'taken for a ride'. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122709, NR 1052/2.

¹¹ Briefed previously on the question the former employees of the Legation still in prison and of denial of exit permits to British subjects and other individuals who wished to join their relatives in Britain Wakefield agreed to approach informally the Romanian Foreign Minister. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, 1801/12, E.F. Given to D.F. MacDermot, May 4, 1956; FO 371/122750, N R 1801/14, MacDermot, British Embassy Bucharest, to Hohler, FO, May 17, 1956.

¹² TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, N R 1801/15, FO Minute, H.A.F. Hohler, 24 May 1956. Supplementary comments from the British Minister in Bucharest regarding the visit of W. Wakefield and J.P.W. Mallalieu.

notoriously subservient.’¹³ Proclaiming that they were interested in visits by religious dignitaries, the Romanian government were hoping ‘to give an air of respectability to the regime and foster the impression that there was complete religious freedom’ in Romania, the British representative believed. MacDermot was of the opinion that a visit by Church of England clergy should not be encouraged since it would be fully utilised for propaganda purposes. ‘The time was not ripe for the opening of relations with the Romanian Orthodox Church’, he concluded.¹⁴ A visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Romania would take place almost ten years later, in June 1965.¹⁵ By then, most of political detainees, including intelligence operatives, had been released from prisons and many of the later were allowed to leave Romania for Britain.

The Communist regime had already adopted a strategy, determined to impress the official guests invited to Romania by offering them a generous welcome and a VIP ‘ritual’.¹⁶ While offering conducted tours Romanian officials gave visitors the impression that they were seeing everything they wished.¹⁷ Although, according to Soviet directives, no foreign citizen from countries outside the Soviet influence was allowed to enter Romania except the diplomats, certain Western visitors were welcomed even before Khrushchev’s proclamation of ‘peaceful coexistence’. Because it was a ‘real democracy,’ Romania believed itself to be attractive to ‘honest people, eager to get informed on the regime’s achievements and ‘the new life of the working masses.’ Moscow was content that the

¹³ Any exchanges with the Orthodox Church representatives were unpopular. However, the FO could not oppose them. Wakefield was advised to contact the Archbishop of York, ‘less partisan’ than the Bishop of Chichester. W. Wakefield to Lord John Hope, 10 July 1956, TNA, PRO, FO 371/122709, 1052/2, p. 2.

¹⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, NR 1801/13, MacDermot, British Embassy Bucharest, to Selwyn Lloyd, May 17, 1956.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/3 c- Secretary of State, Visits to Eastern Europe, 24 May 1965.

¹⁶ Romanians succeeded in impressing their guests. FO 371/122750, N R 1801/15, FO Minute, H.A.F. Hohler, 24 May 1956. Supplementary comments from the British Minister in Bucharest regarding the visit of W. Wakefield and J.P.W. Mallalieu.

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, 1801/14, MacDermot, British Embassy Bucharest to Hohler, FO, May 17, 1956.

Romanians showcase their achievements since, in doing so, the myth that Romania remained independent was encouraged. ‘Outstanding personalities’ came to Romania in 1953 for the Third World Youth Congress.¹⁸ Of course ‘outstanding personality’ should be taken to mean ‘actual communist’ or ‘useful dupe’. Monica Felton from Britain, a laureate of the International Stalin Prize for promoting peace, chaired the reunion of the ‘Young Women’ at the Pioneers’ palace.¹⁹ Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury and vice-president of the British-Soviet Society was invited by the Romanian government in September 1948 and left impressed by the diffusion of the ideas of ‘social justice and planned production, the basis of an organized society, originating from the Soviet Union.’ While ideas were diffused, Soviets were invisible. Johnson ‘had hardly seen any Soviet soldiers,’ although they were there until 1958.²⁰ Johnson might have implied that the Romanian government was carrying an independent policy out of any Soviet interference.

Seemingly, there were visitors prepared to appreciate the Communist regime and disregard its more negative aspects. Others, such as Wakefield, arriving less gullible and pre-disposed to celebrate the accomplishments presented to him, could not resist the hospitality offered. The two MPs who visited Romania in May 1956 were impressed with a lavish hospitality, including a visit to the luxurious Sinaia resort, the former summer residence of the Royal family, and the offer of free holiday at the Black Sea at the expense of the Romanian government. Wakefield was invited to return to Romania later in the summer to spend a holiday as a guest of the government ‘and is, I believe, seriously considering doing so’, Mac Dermot noted. ‘The Romanians are experts at this sort of

¹⁸ Invitations were issued by the Committee ‘Fight for Peace,’ the Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries or the General Confederation of Labour. “Foreign Visitors in Our Country,” “Rumania’s capital prepares for the Youth Festival,” *New Life in Rumania*, Bucharest, no. 2-3, July – October 1952; *New Life in Rumania*, Bucharest, no. 2, April-May 1953.

¹⁹ “Personalities from all over the world – guests of our country,” *New Life in Rumania*, Bucharest, no. 4, August- September 1953.

²⁰ At a meeting organized by the British–Romanian Friendship association, Johnson declared that he intended to write a book on the new democracies based on his visit to the Eastern European countries. *Rumanian News*, no. 223, 19 September 1948, p. 1 and *Rumanian News*, no. 263, 31 October 1948, p. 1.

thing,' the British Minister in Bucharest, admitted.²¹ Several years later Wakefield would become chairman of the British-Romanian parliamentary committee.²²

There were two classes of visitors the Romanians would particularly welcome – journalists and Members of Parliament - the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Preoteasa, had told MacDermot in February 1956. 'In the present post-Congress atmosphere of having nothing to conceal and much to be proud of, a visiting British journalist would be given fairly wide (though obviously not complete) freedom of movement and of making contacts', Mac Dermot believed.²³

Expanding on his favourite theme of misrepresentation by the capitalist press and radio of the facts of life in Eastern Europe, Preoteasa, expressed the hope that there would be an increase in the number of visits to Romania from Britain by persons concerned with the formation of public opinion. 'I asked him whether journalists would not have difficulties about visas and he said absolutely none. As I looked a bit dubious, he repeated this with emphasis.' MacDermot reported this change of attitude to the Foreign Office, suggesting that this be brought to the knowledge of 'the more responsible newspapers'. The British representative indicated to his superiors that he would welcome a visit by a well qualified journalists – 'ideally someone like Gordon Shepherd – who would be able to

²¹ Wakefield was 'enthusiastic about the prospects of increased trade which were held out to him (which, I think, include prospects for some of his companies in which he himself is interested) and will certainly press for the early conclusion of a trade agreement.' He 'felt that the Romanians were so pleasant, that there was a sporting chance of converting them to free enterprise. On the other hand, Mr. Mallalieu was, I think, also impressed, but particularly by the economic planning aspect.' TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, 1801/14, MacDermot, British Embassy Bucharest to Hohler, FO, May 17, 1956.

²² The set up of the committee was suggested in 1956 by the Labour MP, John Baird, to the Romanian representatives in London. The committee was established on 30 March 1960. Vice-chairman the Labour MP Marcus Lipton. Treasurer was the Labour MP, W. Wilkins, and secretary the Conservative B. Drayson. Romanian legation in London, 5 March 1956. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 54/1956, f. 6.

²³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122740, NR 1631/2. Mac Dermot, British Legation Bucharest to H.A.F. Hohler, CMG, Foreign Office, 29 February 1956.

obtain information 'beyond the scope of the Legation', information which 'should be of great assistance to our appreciation of the Romanian scene'.²⁴

'The Romanians would take great pains to obtain mainly favourable impressions but an astute observer should be able to penetrate the red carpet without difficulty,' MacDermot believed.²⁵ As seen, the MPs who travelled to Romania two months after Mac Dermot's conversation with Preoteasa did not succeed in penetrating the façade built by the Romanian regime.

On receiving the credentials of the new British Minister accredited in Bucharest, Allen Dudley, the president of the State Council, Chivu Stoica,²⁶ also maintained that the Romanians were happy to receive scientists, artists and writers as well as tourists. The exchange of scientists was brought up by the Romanians during Wakefield's visit. The Foreign Office did not see however any advantage in this, either politically or scientifically since 'officially sponsored exchanges would contribute to the prestige of this fraudulent regime and involve us in unnecessary expenditure.'²⁷

The British invited to Romania 'would be free to travel throughout the country, visit anything they wished and talk with anyone they met', Stoica told Dudley.

²⁴ Although *The Times*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* seemed disposed to take advantage of the opportunity, as indicated by MacDermot in his report, I did not find any evidence in the archives concerning any visit by British journalists to Romania that year. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122740, NR 1631/2. Mac Dermot, British Legation Bucharest to H.A.F. Hohler, CMG, Foreign Office, 29 February 1956.

²⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122740, NR 1631/2. Mac Dermot, British Legation Bucharest to H.A.F. Hohler, CMG, Foreign Office, 29 February 1956.

²⁶ Chivu Stoica, a railway-worker like Gheorghiu Dej, joined the illegal Communist Party in the 1930s and was imprisoned for taking part in the Grivita Rail Yards strike. Released after 23 August 1944, Stoica was elected in the Central Committee of the RCP. He achieved prominence in the state rather the party hierarchy. Stoica was propelled upwards by the political considerations of the moment and by his friendship with Gheorghiu-Dej. When Gheorghiu-Dej became Minister of Communications, Stoica was appointed general manager of the Railway administration and then he held the position of Minister of Railways. In 1948, Stoica became Minister of Industry and deputy premier in March 1950.

In April 1954, Gheorghiu-Dej handed over the position of first secretary to Gheorghe Apostol to resume it the following year; in 1955 he felt compelled to give up the premiership. This is how Stoica got it. During the big government reshuffle of March 1961, Stoica lost his premiership to Ion Gheorghe Maurer. Open Society Archives Budapest, 300/60/657, Romanian Unit, in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, no. 3-4/2003, pp. 182-183.

²⁷ Though, the FO did not stand in the way of exchanges of scientists arranged privately. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, N R 1801/15, FO Minute, H.A.F. Hohler to T.G. Ward, 24 May 1956.

Notwithstanding these assurances, he did not appear credible to Dudley. Good intentions and pleasant declarations meant little without removing obstacles impeding good relations. Exchanges of all sorts would be more valuable, Dudley assessed, if the Government would not interfere by controlling British subjects already residing in Romania. Restrictions on travel hampered British diplomats in performing their duties. The fact that Romanians might suffer the consequences of their friendship with the British subjects was also a matter of concern.²⁸

Stoica denied any intention to put the British under observation, claiming that the surveillance department was 'new and inexperienced.' (It was actually seven years old). The Romanian government was just concerned about offering protection to all diplomatic missions from 'lawless elements which, unfortunately, still existed even in a socialist country.' Surveillance had been necessary in the past because of 'the incursion of foreign parachutists' and the instigation of 'certain foreign broadcasts,' Stoica assessed, adding that the British staff should not to worry for their Romanian friends.²⁹

However laudable the initiative for resuming ties with the West might have been it was neither genuine nor independent. Peaceful co-existence proclaimed by Khrushchev was presumably behind the efforts towards the normalization of relations with the Western countries. 'Romania has so little independence in matters of foreign affairs,' the British

²⁸ 'The chances the Romanian PM knew nothing about it [surveillance] were sufficient to make it worthwhile to let him know our feelings on the general subject.' TNA, PRO, FO 371/122709, 1052/4, Alan Dudley to Selwyn Lloyd, 12 September 1956.

²⁹ Stoica may have alluded to the incident which took place in July 1953, when thirteen British and American trained agents were parachuted into Romania to support the anti-Communist resistance. The Romanian authorities conducted a publicized trial and used it as evidence of Western espionage for propaganda purpose.

The following year the Intelligence began questioning the wisdom of supporting resistance activities behind the Iron Curtain. Elizabeth W. Hazard, *Cold War crucible: United States foreign policy and the conflict in Romania, 1943-1953*, p. 232.

Minister in Bucharest remarked in May 1956.³⁰ There were enough proofs to confirm this assertion.

The Soviet leaders' visit to Britain in April 1956 revealed the degree of Romania's subservience to Moscow. The visit of N.A. Bulganin, the president of the Council of Ministers, and N.S. Khrushchev, member of the Presidium, was given full coverage by the party newspaper, *Scanteia*, which detailed the movements of the Soviet leaders in great length, and every day. From the correspondence transmitted by *Scanteia*'s reporter in London, the reader might have got the impression that the future fate of Britain was dependent upon the outcome of the visit.³¹ More than simply providing details of the visit, *Scanteia* paid homage to the visitors. Praise was so effusive that one feels embarrassed reading it. Even the weather conspired to produce the correct tone for such a momentous occasion. After a gloomy morning, the moment the Soviet leaders arrived at Victoria station, 'the sun, triumphing against the clouds, came into sight,' a sign indicating that the visit would start 'under good auspices.'³² The readers were reminded that the Soviets had already taken important steps to brighten the international situation. It was as if the sunny day was designed for a visit of such importance. 'A human channel' had been waiting for the arrival of the Soviet leaders on both sides of the street leading to Claridge

³⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, NR 1801/13, MacDermot, British Legation, Bucharest to Selwyn Lloyd, 17 May 1956.

³¹ The new Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, hoped to increase his prestige as a result of the Soviet leaders' visit. The fact that he failed in obtaining the Americans' approval for British-Sino cooperation made his maintenance at power vulnerable, John Baird, a Labour MP, told a Romanian diplomat. Certain British MPs talked even about Eden stepping down. The fact that Butler and Macmillan who might have taken Eden's place, did not get along, made possible Eden's maintenance at power. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 54/1956, ff. 11-12.

Scanteia no. 3571, 15 April 1956, p. 1.

³² The Soviets reached London after a four-day trip. The visit took place between 18 and 28 April 1956. They were received by the PM Anthony Eden and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Selwyn Lloyd, at Victoria station.

hotel where the Soviet guests were to be accommodated and some Londoners could be seen carrying short English-Russian conversation guides edited by the *Daily Express*.³³

The visit went apparently smoothly. The Soviets had extensive meetings with the Premier and were received by Queen Elizabeth at Windsor Castle.³⁴ A Joint Statement on the development of commercial and cultural relations was signed. The Soviets expressed interests in importing from Britain up to two hundred billion rubbles annually. Britain could not, however, export certain goods, restricted due their strategic importance. Cultural, scientific and technical exchanges were also expected to develop.³⁵

In contrast to the enthusiasm displayed by the press, there was despair in Romania's prisons. And more than despair, 'resentment appeared against all that was British.

When the word went round that the Russians had gone to London and billion-dollar contracts were in the making, people said: „Hypocritical Albion and nation of shopkeepers. Here they go again betraying the whole world.”³⁶

One incident had though disturbed the visit. *Scanteia* disclosed it to its Romanian readership two weeks later. At a luncheon offered by the Labour Party, the Soviet leaders had to face a 'slander' when a list of two hundred forty five Social-Democrats imprisoned in the Soviet Union and the satellites' prisons was handed over and the prisoners' release was requested. The origin of the 'horrible elicitation' was traced, *Scanteia* announced. The list had been 'concocted' by a group of American journalists led by the Editor in Chief of the *New Leader* (a New York newspaper), Sol Levitas, and then sent to the British MPs,

³³ According to an official statement the Soviet Union was ready to collaborate with the United Nations in maintain peace in the Middle East. *Scanteia*, no. 3574/ 19 April 1956, p. 1.

Scanteia, no. 3573/18 April 1956, p. 3.

³⁴ *Scanteia*, no. 3575/ 20 April 1956, p. 4 and *Scanteia* no. 3578/ 23 April 1956, p. 4.

³⁵ *Scanteia*, no. 3581/ 28 April 1956, pp. 1-4, *Scanteia*, no. 3583/ 30 April 1956, p. 4.

³⁶ Prisoners' resentment towards duplicitous British foreign policy was expressed in an original way, by ceasing learning English. Learning foreign languages was one of the activities which, although not allowed by the guardians, was widespread among political detainees. 'Everyone started learning French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, anything but English. But of course there was still Uncle Sam and his bag of dollars so English classes began again in order to speak American.' Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Barker, London, 1963, p. 167.

among them Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell. The ‘calumniators’ of the *New Leader* aimed at ‘poisoning the international climate, hindering detente and preventing Anglo-Soviet friendship’.³⁷

From within the Labour Party, some MPs, with communist affinities, were almost as critical as were the Romanians. A member of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, Edith Summerskill, praised Communism as a society directed to ensuring working class well-being and maintained in a speech to the Labour students at the University of Liverpool that Soviet domestic policy should not have been an issue of the Labour leaders’ concern.³⁸ Konni Zilliacus also admonished the Labour Party leadership. The Soviet leaders should not be made responsible for the internal affairs of other countries, Zilliacus maintained in a letter to the weekly *New Statesmen and Nation*. He pointed to one of the ‘instigators,’ Morgan Philips, who, Zilliacus claimed, was in the habit of insulting Eastern European countries. Zilliacus reminded Philips that East Bloc nations were members of the United Nations. Philips refused to admit that the Baltic countries had become ‘many years ago’ Soviet republics. Was Philips in favour of peaceful coexistence and the United Nations Charter or was he on the side of John Foster Dulles and some disgruntled immigrants?³⁹ Tom Driberg imagined a hypothetical situation in an article published by the *Reynold's News*. What if Dulles and Stassen were invited to Moscow and their hosts said,

³⁷ “Cand joci cum iti canta altii”[Dancing on songs played by others] *Scanteia*, no. 3587, 5 May 1956, p 4, article first published by *Pravda* no. 125 (13.788).

³⁸ Since she had advocated passionately the benefits of Communism, Summerskill accepted to visit Romania the following year at the invitation of the government. Upon her return to Britain, Summerskill agreed to be interviewed on her impression of Romania. The interview was supposed to take place on Radio Free Europe. The first thing she asked for was to convey a message to the Romanian Minister in London, a request which astonished Ion Ratiu, the chair of the Association of Romanian exiles. ‘Don’t you realize that this is an anti-Communist transmitter?’ ‘You mean that you want me to attack Romania?’ Summerskill replied, panicked and confused.. While Ratiu indicated that he would permit her to proceed, while reserving the right to challenge objectionable statements, Summerskill refused to listen and left the studio in such a hurry that she forgot her gloves there. “With and without gloves,” *Free Rumanian Press*, no. 46 (II), 4 December 1957. The incident was also described by *Daily Mail*, 5 November 1957. *Scanteia* devoted a long and spirited defence of Summerskill on 5 November 1957 for refusing to attack ‘a government in power’ and uttered accusations against Ratiu, ‘paid by Henry Ford’.

³⁹ Zilliacus’s letter to the *New Statesmen and Nation*. “Distinguished Labours condemn Labour Party leaders’ reactionary behaviour” - news passed by Moscow through Agerpress on 9 May – with reference to an article edited by *Pravda* and republished by *Scanteia* no. 3591, 10 May 1956, p. 3.

‘We have lists of our communists imprisoned by Britons in Cyprus, Malaya and British Guyana. Please release them!’ John Baird, a Labour MP, also criticized the Labour leaders’ action, while Emmanuel Shinwell, a former Minister in Attlee’s government, asked the party to apologize. Although Socialists and Communists had different opinions concerning the means to fight Capitalism the Social Democrats had to reach an agreement with the Communists, the Labour Party ideologue, G.D.H. Coll, resolved.⁴⁰

Any attempt to examine publicly the topics dealt with during the Soviet leaders’ visit would not lead to the desired results, the British Prime Minister stated in the House of Commons on 3 May 1956. Nevertheless, the intervention of the Labour leaders was not in vain.⁴¹ The Romanian Social-Democrats were released under the Decree no. 206 of 24 April 1956.⁴² They attributed their release to Gaitskell’s representation to Bulganin and Khrushchev.⁴³

⁴⁰ “Distinguished Labours condemn Labour Party leaders’ reactionary behaviour” - news passed by Moscow through Agerpress on 9 May – with reference to an article edited by *Pravda* and republished by *Scanteia* no. 3591, 10 May 1956, p. 3.

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, NR 1015/3, FO to J. S. Somers Cocks, British Consulate in Munich, 12 May 1956.

The Social democrats were included in the list handed by Sir William Hayter to Gromyko and that handed by the British Prime Minister to Bulganin and Khrushchev, TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, NR 1015/12.

⁴² The Decree may have been consonant with the directives issued by Khrushchev. Ana-Maria Lascu, “Eliberarea Social-Democratilor din inchisorile comuniste, 1956,” [The Release of Social-Democrats from Communist prisons], *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 3-4/2003, pp. 94-95.

⁴³ A Romanian member of the Legation staff in Bucharest met by chance a leading Social-Democrat, Professor Motas, imprisoned since 1948. He and six other Social Democrats had been released on the same day at the beginning of May.

The Observer also brought up the release of other Socialists, Petre Mihaila, a former president of the Romanian Miners’ Union, sentenced to 20 years hard labour in a secret trial in November 1954, and Simion Garbovan. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, NR 1015/15, E.G. Willan, Bucharest to E.F. Given, 17 May 1956.

The President of the Independent Social-Democratic Party, Constantin Titel-Petrescu, was released as a result of the decree. His drama began when he stood against collaborating with the Communist in the elections of November 1946. His persistence in maintaining the identity and autonomy of the Social-Democrats brought him a lot of pressure from within and outside the party. After leaving the party in March 1946, he founded the Independent Social-Democratic Party which was short-lived. Arrested during the night of 5/6 November 1948 together with his principal collaborators Titel-Petrescu was trialled on 22 January 1952, after an investigation that had lasted four years. Declared guilty of high treason for attempting to crumble the constitutional order, was condemned to hard labour for life (subsequently to life imprisonment). Nicolae Jurca, “Ultimul Socialist cu lavaliera. Constantin-Titel Petrescu,” *Magazin istoric*, October 2007, pp. 77-80; Nicolae Jurca, *Istoria social-democratiei din Romania*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 382.

Another amnesty took place the previous year, in September 1955, one month before Romania's admission to the United Nations.⁴⁴ The amnesty had been however very selective and shattered utterly the morale of those who continued to be imprisoned:

....[t]he Roumanian amnesty in September which released all the war criminals and those with sentences up to five years, as well as groups of other small offenders. There was still no hope in sight for us with heavy sentences . . . It was awful to see foreigners being released and those who had been locked up on the merest suspicion of having had dealings with them, still being kept in prison. Nothing seemed to make sense, absolutely nothing.⁴⁵

Most political prisoners hoped that Romania would not be received into the United Nations, until, among other points, they had been granted freedom. 'We felt deeply deceived and hope in the Western Allies began to fade.'⁴⁶ In article 4 of the Peace Treaty signed in 1947, Romania accepted the obligation to set free all persons held in confinement on account on their activities in favour of the United Nations, and not to take any future measures incompatible with this purpose. Although Britain had previously protested against the Romanian Government's disregard of articles of the Peace Treaty guaranteeing for instance freedom of political opinion, it was by then 'not clear to the HMG that it would be helpful to the persons concerned to raise this matter in the United Nations'.⁴⁷

Romanians and British envisioned the resumption of bilateral relations quite differently in 1956. While the Romanians were adamant about initiating cultural contacts and trade, the British referred to the failure of the Romanian government to bring up the

⁴⁴ On 14 October 1955, the General Assembly decided by resolution no. 995 (X) on the admission of Romania, along with other fifteen other states in the United Nations. The Romanian Government had previously requested three time admission: in 1947, 1948 and 1954. *Romania la Organizatia Natiiunilor Unite [Romania at the United Nations]*, Bucharest, 1995, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁵ Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Barker, London, 1963, p. 166.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴⁷ FO 371/122694, N R 1015/ 8.

issue of the outstanding financial debt.⁴⁸ Without having the issue of the debt service resolved, it would be difficult for the British government to give any encouragement to cultural exchanges.⁴⁹

British claims against Romania had been the subject of negotiation with the Romanian Government since the Second World War. The British authorities refused to unlock the Romanian funds located in Britain until an agreement on debt service could be reached. They intended to use the blocked funds, worth about 10 million pounds, to cover existing Romanian loans then unserviced. Debt service was also understood to include money owed to Britons following the nationalisation of what had been private companies. An important part of the Romanian funds was used to compensate the British shareholders through the nationalization of their assets in Romania.⁵⁰ Some explanation is required.

At the end of 1947, the Romanian government had appointed administrators to take charge of two large British-owned oil companies 'Astra Romana' and 'Unirea.' The action was launched under the pretext that the two companies had not met the production quotas accorded to them in the Romanian four years plan, although the quotas being set at an impossibly high figure, the companies protested against that imposition.⁵¹

Shortly thereafter, in June 1948, a sweeping decree completed the nationalization of all enterprises, including the foreign-owned oil companies, metallurgical establishments, mines, banks, and insurance companies. The situation in the Romanian oil industry

⁴⁸ Nicolae Korcinski, the new Minister in London, described the first duty of his mission as being to expand cultural and commercial contacts and interchange of knowledge between our two peoples. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122756, N R 1903/6. Mac Dermot, Bucharest, to Hohler, 26 March 1956- Personalities report.

Korcinski, appointed on 7 March 1956, was Romania's representative to London for less than two years, until 4 November 1956. Information on Romanian diplomats was made available by Stelian Obiziu, Director of the Archives at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴⁹ 'There would be sharp criticism from British creditors', Korcinski was told, 'if the British government followed his suggestion'. J. Ward, the Head of the Northern Department, reminded Korcinski that the normal practice for debtors was to approach their creditors with an offer. FO 371/122709, 1052/3, 1 August 1956.

⁵⁰ Cabinet Division, CB, No. 1503, Bucharest, August 12, 1948, General-Secretary, Ana Toma, to the Finance Minister, Vasile Luca. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of External Relations, Dossier 12/1948, f. 15.

⁵¹ NCSSA, Fond Documentar, Dossier no. 121, vol 1, ff. 134-135. The information Bureau of the British Legation, 18 December 1947.

deteriorated in the years that followed. Despite boasts in the local press regarding the successful introduction of ‘socialist competitions’ in the oil industry and the surpassing of targets, production was maintained at round 11,800 tons per day, running behind the programme. “Sovrompetrol” enjoyed a privileged position occupied like the other Sovrom companies.⁵² According to a press article published by *Scanteia* on 4 November 1949,

Sovrompetrol has an enormous role to play in reclaiming and developing our oil industry which suffered so much from the sabotage of the Anglo-American companies. Sovrompetrol brings from the Soviet Union the necessary technical equipment for drilling and production –draw works, drill pipe, pipelines, tractors etc; it has introduced and continuing to introduce into our oil industry advanced working methods – the movement of a drilling rig in two days instead of 30; it has put into application a perfect system of organization of work. At the beginning of the month of October Sovrompetrol had fulfilled the drilling plan by 125% and the production plan by 101%.⁵³

The claims on behalf of British oil companies for oil supplied to Russia as reparations at the end of the war had been rejected by the Romanian government. In 1951 the British were considering invoking a special disputes procedure within the framework of the United Nations. Article thirty-three of the Romanian Peace Treaty

laid down that if agreement cannot be reached with the Romanian government the claims shall be referred to the three heads of mission in Bucharest. If the Soviet minister refused to co-operate, we could, under the Treaty, invite the Secretary-General of the UN to appoint an arbitrator and would probably obtain a favourable judgement. But without Soviet cooperation we should receive no satisfaction, whatever the UN arbitrator might decide.⁵⁴

This mechanism, therefore, did not seem likely to work. Reprisal remained an option.

In reprisal, therefore, Romanian assets in Britain were seized in accordance with Article twenty-seven of the Peace Treaty with Romania concluded in 1947 and were

⁵² The formation of the latest of the joint Soviet-Romanian companies, Sovrom-Gaz represented an important further encroachment by the Soviet Union in a vital sector of the Romanian economy. Sovrom-Metal, Sovrom-Carbune and Sovrom-Constructii had been further established in 1949. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78613, R 11158/11338/37, Chancery Bucharest to R. Department. Information on Romanian exports of petrol to the Soviet Union between March and September 1949.

⁵³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/78613, British Information Office, Annex to Pr. Rev. 1537, Translation of the article “Sovroms, a powerful factor in the development of our national economy,” *Scanteia*, 4 November 1949.

⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/95003, 1072/2- FO minute-- Brief for preparatory talks; the implementation of the Balkan Peace Treaties; Human Rights-Property claims and satellite armed forces. ANNEX 4 - claims under article 33 of the Roumanian Peace Treaty - January 1951.

distributed to certain British claimants between 1955 and 1957. The total amount distributed came to 7.6 million pounds.⁵⁵

When Anglo-Rumanian negotiations opened in February 1955, the British claims presented to the Romanians were for 180 million pounds, of which 112 million pounds represented the nationalisation and Peace Treaty claims of the British oil companies, and thirty-seven million represented bonded debt. The British agreed to accept two million pounds in respect of the miscellaneous claims worth thirty million pounds, to leave bonded debts to the side, and defer settlement of the oil companies' claims until the two million pounds had been paid. Negotiations were adjourned because the Romanian Government insisted that the oil companies' Peace Treaty claims should be covered by the global settlement of two million pounds, and that nationalisation claims should not be raised for twenty years.⁵⁶

The date set for resumption of talks on the critical financial issues was set for 16 April 1956.⁵⁷ A Romanian delegation left Bucharest in the morning of 14 April with the purpose of concluding a commercial agreement and solving financial problems.⁵⁸ The Romanian position was that the debt issue could be settled within the scope of an overall-all trade agreement. Essentially, Romania would pay off its debt in kind, and in oil. The British intention was to assess compensation on a monetary basis and not in the form of oil delivered over a period of years.

British intransigence probably owed something to the discovery that the Romanians were also coquetting with the Americans. London was not simply shocked, but angry. 'We might surely have expected that the Americans would have informed us of this

⁵⁵ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 25/1953, ff. 23-24.

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/29 FO Minute, Miss Goodinson, 8 May 1956, draft memorandum on trade and financial negotiations.

⁵⁷ The Romanian negotiators were not authorised by Bucharest to discuss a settlement which would either resume service of bonds or exclude them altogether. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122729, NR 1151/5 (A), H.A.F. Hohler to Ward, Permanent Undersecretary, March 13, 1956.

⁵⁸ *Scanteia*, no. 3571, 15 April 1956, p. 1.

when we consulted them about our own negotiation. We should be glad to learn what line the Americans intend to take.’⁵⁹ The American Legation admitted that the Romanians put forward a proposal on 7 March in a note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the State Department: the discussion on Romanian assets in the United States, the claims on Romania and possible means of improving trade relations were mentioned. Although suggesting discussion in Bucharest on outstanding financial and economic questions including trade, debts and oil and other claims,⁶⁰ the Romanian note of 7 March was very guarded, in that it stated that Romania was prepared to discuss ‘some American claims,’ without being more specific. There was no specific reference to the claims of the United States oil companies on Romania.⁶¹ The State Department was ‘very sympathetic’ with efforts to work out a trade agreement, which included a settlement of oil claims and hoped that an agreement could be reached ‘on a reasonable monetary value’ to be placed on expropriated property.⁶² About half of the US claims estimated at 88,000,000 American dollars had been filled by Standard Oil of New Jersey and other American companies that had large stakes in the Ploiesti oilfields.⁶³ Although inclined to reply favourably, the American Government opposed payment of the claims in oil since such payment may have

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/22 - Outward Saving telegram from FO to Washington, no 2036. Saving, 4 May 1956.-repeated for information to Bucharest: Confidential drive.

⁶⁰ A telegram from Bucharest to the FO gave the BBC and US Legation stories and mentioned that the gaff had been blown by Drucan [Brucan], the newly appointed Romanian Minister in Washington. The State Department had since confirmed to the British that, immediately after calling on the White House, Drucan told the US press the story. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/25- From Bucharest, 3 May 1956- Reports BBC announcement that the Ro Gov had offered to negotiate outstanding US oil claims. US Legation confirms.

⁶¹ The US reply refers to ‘US claims’ though it did not say whether oil was part of them or not. The formal US reply to the Romanians suggested an exchange of memoranda between the United States and Romanian Government, these memoranda to list subjects which each side would propose to raise in any negotiation. The State Department told us that, assuming these memoranda are produced, they will be then examined to see whether there is any common ground or prospect of successful talks, and only then would they decide whether there is any common ground to hold talks.

⁶² TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/22- Despatch from Washington to FO, 30 April 1956- Roumanian Oil debts- reports points made by the State Department.

⁶³ The *New York Times* and other papers published the story on 2 May 1956. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/30, J.R. Jenkins, Minister of Fuel & Power to Laskey, May 11, 1956. Enclosed draft of the telegram to Washington and a copy of Brock’s letter on the Romanian Oil Debts.

offered encouragement to other countries contemplating nationalization of oil industries.’⁶⁴

The fact that ‘not a single word’ of this impending negotiation had been mentioned to them made the British indignant.⁶⁵ They considered

. . . whether to make a shindy with the State Department and we did in fact, see them again today. They were red-faced and apologetic but it transpired, in discussion, that there is really nothing in the latest US/Romanian exchange which affects the oil debts position... now that we have the full story, it is clear that nothing has been done which would prejudice our current negotiations and, more especially, the oil aspect. The State Department, in an endeavour to dispose of public misapprehension, will be issuing a press statement probably tonight or tomorrow, summarising the terms of the US reply to the Romanians.⁶⁶

The United States had not entered into trade agreements for exchange of specific commodities as the European nations frequently did, the Americans maintained. Normal commercial exchanges were freely carried out by American commercial interests without government intervention. ‘This was really put in more as a piece of propaganda than anything else,’ the British Ambassador to Washington commented.⁶⁷

The State Department informed the Petroleum Attaché that no Government official was planning any trip to Bucharest and they ‘would certainly not do so without consulting the State Department’.⁶⁸ The British and the American oil companies ‘did not see eye to eye in that the amounts at stake were different. Shell’s interest in the acquisition of crude was greater than Jersey’s and the latter had already written off most of their Romanian assets.’⁶⁹

⁶⁴ ‘Within the past year or so, Turkey, Bolivia and Guatemala have adopted favourable oil legislation, after having followed a highly nationalistic policy in the preceding period. It would be unfortunate if any encouragement should be given to a reversal of this favourable trend.’ The value of the Roumanian assets was outweighed by risks incurred elsewhere by such a precedent. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/20 and 1151/21, Washington, 25 and 27 April.

⁶⁵ ‘Our consequent irritation arose from the leak made by the Romanians.’ J. H. Brock, British Embassy Washington, to A.F. Williams, Ministry of Fuel and Power, London, 4 May 1956, TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/30, J.R. Jenkins, Minister of Fuel & Power to Laskey, May 11, 1956.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/31, Confidential from Washington to FO, 15 May 1956.

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/22. Despatch from Washington to FO, 30 April 1956.

When negotiations with the Romanians were resumed on April 18, 1956, the British miscellaneous claims had risen to about thirty-five million pounds, as a result of the completion by the Foreign Compensation Commission of their registration; a figure of eight million pounds was placed on the non-oil nationalisation claims and a figure of 4.2 million pounds on the non-oil Peace treaty claims.⁷⁰ The FO list of nationalisation claims included private shareholdings in Romanian oil companies and outstanding oil royalties amounting to about one million pounds.⁷¹

While the Romanian delegation was dissatisfied with the pace of the negotiations, the British view was that the Romanians were not prepared for a settlement of debts, especially for compensation for the nationalisation of the oil industry. 'No progress was made in the trade negotiations because the Romanians mainly wanted to sell us oil and the oil companies would not buy it without some agreement about compensation for nationalisation.'⁷²

Negotiations were adjourned in August 1956 without any offer made by the Romanian delegation.⁷³ Failure arose also from British insistence that any trade arrangement was contingent on a satisfactory settlement of the debts.⁷⁴

Failure of economic negotiations, notwithstanding, the British admitted that the Romanians had been 'less disagreeable in the past two years in their treatment of the

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/29 FO Minute (Goodinson), 8 May 1956. Draft memorandum on the trade and financial negotiations with Ro delegation and a list of notes on Britain's claims delivered to the Romanian Government since 1948 which have not been answered.

⁷¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122730, R 1151/24, W. E. Fitzsimmons (from the Treasury) to R. Jenkins, Ministry of Fuel and Power on Romanian negotiations, 1 May 1956.

⁷² If the Romanian minister raised this point with the Minister of State, Commander Noble might reply that it was up to the Romanian government to make some new proposals on the debts question if they are anxious to develop trade with us. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122756, 1903/11- FO Minute - Reilly, 23 November 1956 - states that commander Noble is seeing the Romanian Minister and refers to the Anglo-Romanian commercial negotiations and the restrictions on movements of foreigners.

⁷³ No date has been fixed for a resumption of the negotiations. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122756, NR 1903/9- Submission of Thomas Brimelow, October 25, 1956.

⁷⁴ Romania was interested in importing industrial equipment from Britain in exchange for agricultural products. Report on the conversation between Ganea, from the Romanian Economic Agency and the Labour MP, John Baird. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 54/1956, f. 14.

British Legation at Bucharest'.⁷⁵ As well, a number of 'minor but unprecedented civilities' such as the celebration of the anniversary of William Shakespeare, the laying of wreaths at the British Cemetery at Snagov and the extremely friendly reception given to the two British MPs accompanying the 'Harlequins' Rugby Team attested to the change in attitude.⁷⁶ The thaw ceased however towards the end of the year.

During the opening phase of the Hungarian uprising the Romanian press attempted to ignore what was going on in the neighbouring country. When events had developed to the point that it could no longer be ignored, the Romanian press and radio reproduced Soviet contentions about the 'reactionary' Hungarian movement and the 'Imperialists spies' parachuted into Hungary.⁷⁷ The Government's messages and speeches also took the Soviet line that a movement by Hungarian workers had been exploited by 'fascist reactionary elements encouraged by Western Powers'.⁷⁸

Concerned about the effect of Western broadcasts, both in revealing inconvenient facts about the internal situation and in telling the Romanians the truth about the events in Hungary, the Romanian authorities condemned Western 'slanders'.⁷⁹ Statements reported by Radio Free Europe and other broadcasts were extracted and protested. Romanian protests, however, served mainly to confirm accounts of significant unrest. 'By protesting so much and so elaborately the Romanian authorities had in effect helped to confirm the stories of unrest amongst students and others. It was also clear that arrests of students have

⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122756, N R 1903/2, FO Minute, (Hohler), 4 February 1956.

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, R 1016/10, MacDermot, Bucharest, to Selwyn Lloyd, May 17, 1956.

⁷⁷ *Free Romanian Press*, 21 November 1956.

⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, NR 1016/20 FO Minute, November 17, 1956.

⁷⁹ The Western broadcasts were widely listened to in Romania. Even though British and American broadcasts in Romania were jammed, at least in Bucharest if not in the provinces services in English, French, German and Italian could be received clearly. FO 371/122696, NR 1016/23 A. Dudley, British Legation Bucharest, to Selwyn Lloyd, FO, 22 November 1956.

been taking place, and that the whole repressive machinery of the State is being turned upon them.’⁸⁰

In Timisoara, a city close to the Hungarian border, students succeeded in organizing a meeting during which a list of requests similar to that of the Hungarian students was read.⁸¹ Romanian authorities arrested the students taking part in the meeting. The following day, students gathered in the centre of the city, asking for the release of their colleagues. The demonstration was brutally repressed: the students were loaded into trucks and taken to unused military barracks. There they were required to sign ‘declarations of desolidarisation’ to be allowed to continue their studies.⁸²

At this juncture, Romanian counter-propaganda revived all the old catch phrases and allegations of the early Cold-War period. The slight thaw vanished as the Romanian media relapsed into the previous familiar routine.⁸³ Western press and radio, particularly ‘the hated *Radio Free Europe*,’ were reviled as ‘the agents of the Imperialists and fascist warmongers, responsible for inciting reactionary elements in Hungary to commit excesses against the true sons of the people and for attempting to divert attention from Western aggression in the Middle East.’ The disproportion between the news published by the Western newspapers or broadcast by Western radio stations, and the offence taken by the Romanians was remarkable.⁸⁴ The authorities organized meetings by students, workers and intellectuals during which, speeches and resolutions condemned the ‘slanders of the

⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, NR 1016/23 A. Dudley, British Legation, Bucharest to Selwyn Lloyd, FO, 22 November 1956.

⁸¹ Western broadcasts, Radio Free Europe as well as Radio Budapest, had played, undoubtedly, a major role in presenting with accuracy events in Hungary. The contrast with the disinformation spread by Romanian broadcasts was stark, and indicated as provocative by the students’ leaders. Mihaela Sitariu, *Oaza de libertate. Timisoara, 30 Octombrie 1956 [Oasis of Freedom. Timisoara, 30 October 1956]*, Iasi, Polirom, 2004, Appendix, The Memorandum of the students from Timisoara.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁸³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, NR 1016/27, Chancery, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 20 December 1956.

⁸⁴ An American correspondent, Welles Hangen of the New York Times, who visited Bucharest, reported certain rumours. He was subsequently attacked in terms unjustified by the contents of his rather dull articles. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, NR 1016/23 A. Dudley, British Legation, Bucharest to Selwyn Lloyd, FO, 22 November 1956.

Western press and radio' and expressed their support to the Hungarian Government and the Soviets in suppressing the 'counter-revolutionary' forces.⁸⁵ The on-going debacle of the Suez intervention provided an opportunity to attempt to deflect criticism.

Taken aback by the virulence of the Romanian reaction, the BBC assured British diplomats in Bucharest of the accuracy of its reports and instanced its reputation for integrity. It was not its intention to provoke the Romanian regime or encourage the Romanians 'into a revolt we cannot support.' In commenting on Romania, they had tried to give as honest a picture as they could, without encouraging wild optimism. At the same time, it was not the BBC's intention to suggest that nothing in the Communist world could ever change. The BBC felt it better to stress 'the concessions or expedients forced upon the Communist rulers by their subjects' than to paint a picture of 'Communist regimes ruthlessly efficient and masters of every possible situation.'⁸⁶

Meanwhile, while it protested, the Romanian authorities were also vigorous in taking steps to ensure that what had happened in Hungary was not repeated in Romania. Guards were established on public buildings and policemen patrolled the streets. Opposition to the regime continued to be dealt with in the usual way by arrests and internal deportations. A new wave of imprisonments followed the uprisings at the end of October when students from major universities were involved in actions which challenged the Communist regime.⁸⁷ There were also disturbances among peasants but no coordination

⁸⁵ The Minister of Education, Miron Constantinescu, spoke to the students in Cluj, thanking them for their 'discipline during recent trying times,' and condemning the 'provocative lies' about unrests among students. „Anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution passed quietly,” *Free Rumanian Press*, 21 November 1956.

⁸⁶ Western allegations of trouble stung the Romanian government to protest and organize demonstrations of loyalty. 'I don't see much fun to be had simply out of making them angry.' TNA, PRO, FO 1110/909, 1037/51, Allan Duddley to Norman Reddaway, 5 December 1956.

In reply Reddaway assessed, 'Even if I am wrong and the Romanians turn out to have more guts than I give them credit for there is little to be gained by needling them into a revolt we can't support. FO 1110/909, PR 1037/51, G.F.N. Reddaway, Foreign Office, to Allen Dudley, British Embassy Bucharest, 17 December 1956.

⁸⁷ Following protests in Timisoara and other Transylvanian towns, hundred arrests had been carried out. „Student unrest and manifestations,” *Free Rumanian Press* „Anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution passed quietly,” 21 November 1956, Release no.25.

between the various social strata so the authorities succeeded in repressing quickly all unrests. As well, the government took steps to meet the most pressing popular economic grievances. To appease the population a series of decrees increasing wages and pensions were published.⁸⁸

What is very striking about this passage is that the British representatives in Bucharest tended to disbelieve the Western press reports, BBC assurances notwithstanding. This was just another proof of how isolated they had become, without reliable contacts and with limited ability to travel within the country. 'Inaccurate or unconvincing news', they suggested, was 'liable to discourage those Romanians who were relying on Western broadcasts to keep them in touch with world events and to maintain their hope for the future.'⁸⁹ The British Minister, Dudley, doubted reports that the Army was 'on the verge of revolt.' The reports, of course, were accurate. He cannot be blamed for his ignorance, since he encountered difficulties getting answers from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs even to the simplest questions and had no other means of ascertaining what was going on. Dudley himself observed that it was no coincidence that the institutions and cities where official meetings had been organised to protest against the 'hostile broadcasts' had for the most part been those where unrest had been reported. Most of them took place in the region adjoining the Hungarian border, where the local population was most aware of, and inspired by, the Hungarian example.⁹⁰

British diplomats also tended to regard anti-Communist risings behind the Iron Curtain as futile. The process of detente and of the 'liberalisation' of the Soviet bloc were

⁸⁸ The government issued a decree which raised minimum salaries to 350 lei a month and minimum pensions to 200 lei a month, which were still far below the subsistence level. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, N R 1016/19. Dudley, British Embassy Bucharest to Selwyn Lloyd, November 8, 1956. *Free Rumanian Press*, 7 November 1956;

⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 1110/909, PR 1037/51, Information Research Department, Allen Dudley to Norman Reddaway, M.B.E., FO, 5 December 1956.

⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, NR 1016/21, Dudley, British Legation Bucharest, to T. Brimelow, Northern Department, Foreign Office, 15 November 1956.

considered to be mutually supporting, and 'the long-term result would be the erosion of the Communist dogma and the relaxation of Cold War tensions'.⁹¹

The thaw was most surely over. 'Whatever the far-reaching political implications of the Hungarian coup, our immediate reaction was an unbearable bitter-sweetness,' the correspondent of the Associated Press, by then a detainee for seven years, recalled. 'Hearing of Suez and that Hungary was an open issue at UNO we joyfully assumed that a hypocritical compromise between East and West would not be possible. But this could only mean more tension and for us directly, a further decrease of our already remote chance of freedom. Undoubtedly, all of this was related to our catastrophic re-isolation.'⁹² Hopes for more extensive contacts were, for the moment, placed on hold. Travel relaxations ended and all applications made by Western diplomats for travel were now turned down. Even ordinary representations on consular matters were now received in a very cool and non-committal way.⁹³ The nadir was reached as the Egyptian crisis unfolded and as Soviet troops moved to crush what was now the Hungarian revolution.⁹⁴ Romania's rulers did not permit anything to happen 'which might embarrass their Soviet masters'.⁹⁵ 'Circumstances had become abnormal again in all the Satellites,' the Foreign Office noted, and 'whatever turn political events may take now and whatever may be the solution of the Egyptian crisis,' the brief relaxation of tension was over and there was nothing the British

⁹¹ The PUSD Planning Staff believed that 'any weakening of the Soviet hold over the Satellites... will come about through *evolution* rather than *revolution*.' SC(61)25, 'United Kingdom policy towards the satellites', 27 June 1961, emphasis added, and C. Tickell (Planning Staff) note, 24 Jan.1964, PLA 13/1; SC(64)1; 'Policy towards the East European satellites', 27 Jan.1964, PLA13/2, FO 371/177821. Geraint Hughes, Harold Wilson's Cold War. *The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970*, The Royal Historical Society, The Boydell Press, 2009, p. 43.

⁹² Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Barker, London, 1963, pp. 174.

⁹³ The tightening of restrictions on the movements of foreign diplomats in Romania was a temporary measure due to events in Hungary, the British were told. FO 371/122756, R 1903/10 FO Minute, D.P. Reilly, 23 November 1956.

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122709, NR 1052/5. Allen Dudley, Bucharest, to Thomas Brimelow, FO, 7 November 1956.

In the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez crisis, the Americans announced their intention to place nuclear weapons in Turkey, Iran, Japan, and West Germany.

⁹⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, N R 1016/21 Allen Dudley, Bucharest, to Thomas Brimelow, FO, 15 November 1956.

could do about.⁹⁶ Romania continued to remain ‘as amenable a Soviet satellite as ever and . . . there is very little risk of serious opposition to the regime developing.’⁹⁷

For the remainder of the decade, relations remained uncomfortably frigid. Surveillance of diplomatic missions continued. The visit of the British Minister, Scott Fox to Transylvania was ‘facilitated’ by a clerk of the Ministry of Interior who accompanied him at all times, pretending to be a representative of the People’s Council.⁹⁸ Occasional or cultural contacts were, once again, almost unknown, and Romania seemed once more a strange, hostile and unknown land. ‘How is the weather like in Sofia?’ a Romanian student was asked during his visit in Britain in 1957. Stefan Barlea, a student representing the Romanian students’ association, took the question first as a premeditated offence. He then realized ‘how little the British knew about Romania.’⁹⁹

Very few Westerners ventured to travel to Romania. Why should they? Getting a visa to enter the country was an adventure itself. In 1959, a Canadian businessman complained that he was subjected to a ‘long and exhausting interrogation’ at the Romanian legation in London before being granted a Romanian visa. He was lucky to have obtained one. Many journalists who wished to travel to Romania for tasks related to their profession were refused. The Canadian succeed only because he was a businessman with high connections and experience in dealing with Communists.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ The British did not apply travel restrictions to Romanian representatives in London since ‘it has never been our policy to refuse permission to travel if the prescribed notice had been given... it would be a mistake to abandon this policy without weighty reasons.’ FO 371/122709, 1052/5, ff. 3-4, FO Minute, Thomas Brimelow, 7 November 1956.

⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122696, NR 1016/20 FO Minute, 17 November 1956.

⁹⁸ Romanian officials were vigilant in preventing R. Scott Fox from seeing everything he wanted. The President of People’s Council (the mayor) of Cluj was instructed to indicate him as objectives of interest Botanical Garden, a medical clinic, one economic enterprise and one or two cultural establishments. In case he wanted to visit the University, the President of the University should avoid putting him in contact with students. Note of April 6, 1959, RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 24/1959, f.6.

⁹⁹ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 22/1964, f. 61.

¹⁰⁰ Had he been treated with a good wine as it happened at the Soviet consulate in Toronto, he would not mind being enquired, the Canadian assessed. Serving wines at visa interviews could be an opportunity for advertising them. And the interview might become a pleasure that way instead of provoking dissatisfaction, the Canadian maintained. Was he serious? During his talks with certain Romanian Ministers, he suggested a publicity campaign for Romanian wines on the British market. Although the wine was not a

After many years of embargoes and other political barriers to trade, British businessmen as well as travellers only gradually began to rediscover Romania. Some few western firms were given leave to open offices in Romania.¹⁰¹ Travel to Romania, however, remained unusual. The principal impediment was probably not just the difficulty in obtaining permission, but the fact that in its communist configuration Romania had lost whatever attractiveness it might have once enjoyed. Arriving in Bucharest in the summer of 1967, A British writer noted enchanted that Britain had no bad association for Romanians. 'It had very few associations at all.'¹⁰² Two decades of isolation did not leave their mark: they erased whatever mark there might have once been.

popular drink in Britain, it represented, though, a profitable market for because of the wine high prices. By selling wines in Britain Romanian could pay for the equipment imported, the Canadian suggested. Report on the talks with Donald Mc Shaver, a 'big poultry farmer and businessman,' with the occasion of his latest visit to Romania, 2-4 April 1959. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations Dossier 31/1959, f. 3.

¹⁰¹ Julian Hale, *Ceausescu's Romania. A political Documentary*, p. 52.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Divergent aims: detainees' release versus cultural exchanges

‘It is impossible to bring to Mr. Bulganin’s notice every unfortunate victim of Communism who had previously deserved well of the Allied cause’. (T. G. Ward, Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office).¹⁰³

‘This business of the detainees in Romania is simply becoming a ritual of question and answer between the Legation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Meanwhile, we go ahead with encouragement to the Roumanian authorities to take up scholarships and otherwise engage in cultural relations.’¹⁰⁴

Although the Romanians’ insistence on cultural contacts with the West appeared to the British as being ‘a manifestation of the policy crystallised at the 20th Party Congress in Moscow,’¹⁰⁵ the Soviets had in fact advised the Romanians ‘not to go too far’ in their relations with the West for this could provoke damage to the entire Socialist camp. The opening of reading rooms in Bucharest would only serve French and American interests, ‘especially if they are going to be served by American and French personnel.’ Perceived enemies would take advantage of the entry to place their agents there. The Americans were interested in propagating ‘the American way of life in order to win public opinion,’ the Soviets warned.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, N R 1015/ 8, FO minute, 23 April 1956, T. G. Ward, Permanent Undersecretary, to the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Reading. ‘We have, it is true, proposed to put in a word for the imprisoned leaders of the Polish Home (Underground) army,’ Ward admitted, adding ‘but they were our allies,’ implying that the question of the Romanians who served the Allies’ cause during the Second World War was given probably to much importance.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, DDG to Controller Overseas ‘C’, British Council, 31 August 1960.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122750, NR 1801/13, MacDermot, British Embassy Bucharest, to the Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, 17 May 1956.

¹⁰⁶ The Soviets also expressed concern at the printing plan for Soviet literature which was reduced to half compared to the previous year. The Romanians replied to the Soviet Minister in Bucharest referring to the ‘enormous number of translations from Russian literature.’ RNA, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 73/1957, ff. 1-2; 5-11.

The Romanian regime combined openness with caution. From the time of his installation, on 7 March 1956, the new Romanian Minister in London, N. Korcinschi, was very active in contacting the local authorities. At his insistence the Lord Mayors of Birmingham and Leeds and the Mayor of Kensington visited Romania. He advocated fervently cultural exchanges and promoted 'major cultural manifestations' and exchanges of delegations but the moment the British mentioned re-opening of the British Council Office in Bucharest, he adopted a 'completely Molotov-like attitude'.¹⁰⁷

A British Council Institute functioned in Bucharest before the Second World War for a short period; opened in 1938, it closed down in the autumn of 1939 when the Council staff was ordered to leave the country.¹⁰⁸ New political circumstances after the Second World War made the reopening uncertain; although the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pauker, did not object in the first instance to the opening of a British Council in Bucharest, her reply was evasive and non-committal'.¹⁰⁹ Britain, however, pushed the resumption of Council activity, and a Representative, T. E. Morray, was sent to Bucharest in October 1947. He began to hire local staff. A single thing had yet to be obtained: the Romanian authorities' agreement. Negotiations for the establishment of the Council in Bucharest seemed to be prolonged indefinitely. London advised Morray to 'restrain his impatience at the absence of any evidence of his mission being successful,' stay on in Romania 'as long as he is tolerated' and do 'what useful work he can in patience.' If it became necessary under pressure from the Romanian Government to withdraw him, 'then we should come out altogether, as in Russia'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Ref CF/RU.680/1, Subject: British Council: Romania, 22 February 1957.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, BW 1/597, GEN/310/295, Brief for the visit to Romania of John Henniker, Director General, 26 September–1 October 1971, General survey of the Council's work and establishment.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Information Office and Library, Bucharest, 30 December 1947. BW 53/10, RU/309/2 T. W. Morray, Regional Officer, Bucharest, to the Regional Officer for the Balkans, The British Council, London, 12 January 1948.

¹¹⁰ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Note of 19 January 1948, signed by P.H.S.

When the blunt answer denying permission came in December 1947,¹¹¹ Morray suggested that he commence cultural work under diplomatic cover as an adjunct to the Information Office of the Legation.¹¹² Another option was to work through a Professor appointed to the University of Bucharest.¹¹³ The search for ‘a suitable incumbent’ for the Chair of English began¹¹⁴ but soon the Romanian Ministry of Education informed the Embassy that the vacancy at the University was suspended making any search for a Professor futile.¹¹⁵

Morray’s proposal for handing the Council affairs over to the Information Office or to other part of the Legation was initially deprecated, and for good reason.¹¹⁶ ‘We maintain in our relations with all the Soviet-dominated countries that we are a separate entity from the Embassy.’¹¹⁷ However, after Morray’s recall on 23 February 1948, his functions were transferred to the Information Officer, John Bennet, ‘prepared to act as our agent.’¹¹⁸ This decision was based on the fact that ‘the Division attached great importance to keeping one foot in Romania so that we can move in there as soon as there is the

¹¹¹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, File Ref CF/RU/680/1 on the British Council Activities in Romania, 21 February 1957.

¹¹² TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, RU/309/2, T. W. Morray to the Regional Officer for the Balkans.

¹¹³ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, RU 8/1 Subject: Romania, From Controller, Overseas ‘C’, 27 January 1948.

¹¹⁴ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, RU/701/2, From Overseas ‘C’ to Controller Overseas ‘C’, 12 January 1948.

Previous to the Romanians’ refusal, Morray opposed the appointment of Professor Willey whom he did not believe suitable ‘either by temperament or academically’ for this post. He did it presumably for having his own candidature accepted since he had no official standing in Romania. ‘It was not the time for sending people in but for getting them out,’ Morray added. BW 53/10, File Ref. Rumania/8/1, 3 February 1948 and Record of telephone conversation, 2 February 1948.

¹¹⁵ In view of the refusal to permit a subsidized chair of English at the University of Bucharest, this post was suppressed. TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Despatch from Deputy Controller, Overseas ‘C’, 9 April 1948.

¹¹⁶ The Representative suggested establishing the Council under diplomatic cover as an adjunct to the Information Office, alternative which had been discussed with the Information Officer in Bucharest. A letter was to be submitted to the FO asking for their approval. TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, RU/309/2 T. W. Morray to Regional Officer for the Balkans, the British Council, London, 12 January 1948.

¹¹⁷ ‘This argument will completely fail if when it suits us we become part of an Embassy.’ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Note of 19 January 1948 signed by P.H.S.

¹¹⁸ The decision to withdraw the Representative was taken on 10 February 1948. The Council material was left ‘in the care of the Information Officer for his use as suitable opportunities occurred.’ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, File Ref CF/RU/680/1. A. I. Macnaghten on the British Council activities in Romania, 21 February 1957.

slightest opportunity to do so.’¹¹⁹ The fact that Pauker stated in March that ‘the possibility of a British Council Centre being set up was not definitely excluded for all time,’ may have also contributed to this compromise.¹²⁰

When the appointment of a British lecturer at the University of Bucharest was broached, the Romanian Foreign Minister replied that the Government was reconsidering the whole educational system. Romania needed ‘technical professors,’ lecturers on engineering, agriculture, medicine, not ‘experts in philosophy’.¹²¹ However, when the Council’s proposed the visit by an expert on malariology to Bucharest and offered to pay for the expenses for a member of the Cantacuzino Institute to visit Britain during the summer of 1948, the Romanian government refused them both. The refusal closed the door on any sort of cultural or scientific exchanges or visits between Britain and Romania.¹²²

In 1956 while the Romanians were enthusiastic about resuming cultural relations, the British reminded them of a barrier to the establishment of friendlier relations: their former employees, who had worked to facilitate cultural exchange, were still imprisoned.¹²³ Although the Foreign Office could not use any leverage to obtain the release of these unfortunates, it was not just that the Romanians showed little interest in any

¹¹⁹ The Information Officer may be in a position to take full advantage of whatever opportunities offer for prosecuting our work there’ and meet the wages bill for the two local appointees. TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Despatch from Deputy Controller, Overseas ‘C’, 9 April 1948. Deputy Controller, Overseas ‘C’, Johnstone.

¹²⁰ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, File Ref CF/RU/680/1, 21 February 1957.

¹²¹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, Extract from Holman’s Despatch no. 87, 10 March 1948, interview with the Romanian Foreign Minister.

¹²² TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, File Ref CF/RU/680/1. First Secretary (Information), British Legation Bucharest, on British Council activities in Romania, 21 February 1957.

¹²³ ‘We have two main grievances against the Romanian Government. The first is that of British women who are either in prison or unable to leave Romania. Mrs. Placa is in prison for, in effect, being an employee of the American Legation while Mrs. Sarry wishes to leave Romania, but is unable to obtain an exit permit. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122756, N R 1903/3, FO Minute (Hohler to Lord John Hope), 9 February 1956; FO 371/122694, NR 1015/8, Draft reply to PQ Lord Pakenham, 23 April 1956.

The former employees of the Information Section of the British Legation at Bucharest were still in prison. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122756, NR 1903/9- Submission of Thomas Brimelow, October 25, 1956. The Permanent Undersecretary, T.G. Ward, raised two cases during the Romanian Minister’s farewell call at the Foreign Office.

agreement, the Treasury and the Board of Trade opposed any attempt to use commercial and financial discussions as a lever to obtain concessions in certain cases.¹²⁴

The announcement of the Soviet leaders' visit to London, at the height of the thaw, generated an avalanche of letters addressed to the Foreign Office, asking for intervention on behalf of certain individuals; among them, one from Karl Viktor of Wied, indicating the situation of his sister, Eleonora Bunea. She had worked in the Press Office of the British Legation for four years. When she realized that she could not legally leave Romania, Bunea attempted, together with her husband and other colleagues, to flee. The group was caught immediately and its members were probably the victims of a trap. Arrested in July 1949, Bunea was tried the following year together with the group and found guilty of high treason and espionage. She received one of the most severe sentences: fifteen years imprisonment.¹²⁵ At the time Viktor's letter was received by the Foreign Office, therefore, Bunea had spent over seven years in gaol and was ill with tuberculosis. Her brother asked for her release on humanitarian grounds.¹²⁶ Her name was included in the list handed by Sir William Hayter, the British Ambassador to Moscow, to Andrei Gromyko,¹²⁷ and the case was brought to the notice of Bulganin and Khrushchev. Princess Alice, countess of Athlone, also appealed to the Foreign Office for Bunea's release. Eleonore was a princess herself, related to the Romanian Royal family through her father,

¹²⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694. NR 1051/1, 16 March 1956.

¹²⁵ The trial took place between 26 and 29 April 1950. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 138.

¹²⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, NR 1015/3, J. S. Somers Cocks, British Consulate Munich, to Selwyn Lloyd, April 18, 1956, transmitting the letter of Karl Viktor Prince of Wied. Eleonore of Wied married Ion Bunea in February 1949 and took his surname.

¹²⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, 1015/5. Letter of Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, to the Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, 19 April 1956; Minute signed by G.G. Brown, 24 April 1956: 'We are not at present at liberty to disclose this fact to Princess Alice,' the reply to the princess was to be written in 'general terms.'; FO to Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, 26 April 1956.

Prince Wilhelm of Wied, the former King of Albania. All the endeavours for her release were in vain: ill, Eleonore died in prison in 1957 when she was only 47 years old.¹²⁸

Another member of the group was a journalist, Liviu Nasta, correspondent of the *New York Times*.¹²⁹ Nasta was also accused of espionage, and figured in a list of agents and traitors as the main collaborator of the British in Romania in the early days of the war,¹³⁰ a circumstance which brought him a harsh sentence: 25 years imprisonment. His health got worse in prison. '[H]e suffered intense pain from an untreated stomach ulcer and in the filthy, crowded conditions his resistance was slowly ground away. Six months before he died in a state of utter exhaustion, he would wake and tell everyone in the cell: "You know, Churchill has asked for me, I shall be freed in a day or two." In the end he could neither walk nor keep his food down nor recognize the people around him.¹³¹

Churchill had indeed written a letter to Gheorghiu-Dej asking for Nasta's release on humanitarian grounds. Nasta's daughter was married in Britain to William Deakin, Warden at Oxford College, and a former counsellor to Churchill. The family tried other channels to encourage clemency, including the Red Cross¹³² and Tito whom Gheorghiu-Dej visited in October 1956.¹³³ For several months, despatches from London to the British

¹²⁸ Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Barker, London, 1963, p. 175.

¹²⁹ The trial of Eleonore Bunea, Liviu Nasta, Constantin Mugur, Annie and Nora Samuelli took place between 26 and 29 April 1950. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 138.

¹³⁰ The list was drafted in Istanbul on 28 November 1944.

The information on former agents reached the Romanian authorities, possibly through certain Soviet agents such as Kim Philby who stole the information. Gheorghe Buzatu, *Din istoria secreta a celui de-al doilea razboi mondial [From the Secret History of the Second World War]*, vol. 2, Bucharest, 1995, p. 399.

¹³¹ Nasta died in Vacaresti prison hospital in December 1956, after seven and a half years imprisonment. He was sixty-eight. Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years' Captivity in Communist Romania*, Barker, London, 1963, p. 175.

¹³² The Countess of Limerick addressed the case to the Red Cross. Under pressure from the British Red Cross, the Romanian Red Cross agreed reluctantly to intervene. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, N R 1015/19, Edward Willan, Bucharest, to E.F. Given, FO, 28 July 1956; N R 1015/20.

¹³³ Nasta's release was requested on humanitarian grounds. Although he was supposed to submit in person Churchill's letter to Gheorghiu Dej, the British representative could not meet the later who was on leave in Belgrade. That made Deakin, the son-in-law of Nasta, consider appealing to Marshal Tito. Deakin also pleaded for his father-in-law's release to the Romanian Minister in London. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122709, 1052/5, A. Dudley to T. Brimelow, November, 7, 1956. FO 371/122694, NR 1015/21; 1015/22; 1015/23, NR 1015/24; N R 1015/6, Given, FO, to Willan, Bucharest.

Legation in Bucharest and further to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs routinely enquired about the chance of Nasta's amnesty. None of the interventions spurred any reaction from the Romanian authorities, except for the information that Churchill's letter had been received and read by Gheorghiu-Dej.¹³⁴

Such occurrences made the British question the 'false bonhomie' of the Romanian officials. There was little chance that Britain would respond positively to proposals for cultural exchanges no matter how eagerly advocated by Romanian officials, while previous employees remained in prison. Although a 'somewhat different line' had been adopted towards the Soviet Union, there was no reason for letting the Romanians 'have what they want on their own terms.'¹³⁵

In 1959 the Romanian Institute for Cultural Affairs with Foreign Countries [IRRCS]¹³⁶ submitted to the British Council a request for collaboration, following an invitation coming from the British Minister in Bucharest.¹³⁷ The Romanians formerly working for the British Council were still in gaol. 'Since they can have worked for the Council only for a few weeks in 1948 the disproportionate nature of the punishment is only too clear.'¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Nasta's name was mentioned in the list submitted to the Romanian Government by Dudley's predecessor, MacDermot, on 17 May 1956. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, NR 1015/24, A. Dudley to T. Brimelow, 22 October 1956.

¹³⁵ TNA, PRO, BW 53/10, CF/RU/680/1, on the British Council: Romania, 22 February 1957.

¹³⁶ This official body carried out the official Party and Government policy on cultural relations, ensuring that Romania was presented in the most favourable light while giving the minimum opportunity for the spread of 'dangerous thoughts'. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, British Legation Bucharest, to Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office, 27 July 1959.

¹³⁷ Scott Fox invited the Romanian Minister of Education and the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs who dealt with cultural questions to formulate concrete ideas and advised London 'to put forward proposals of our own which will require cooperation from them.' TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R.D.J. Scott Fox, British Legation to A.A.F. Haigh, FO, 8 May 1959.

The President of the IRRCS replied to the Minister's letter of 8 May enquiring on the activities which the British Council hoped to pursue in Romania. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, J. Graham, Acting Director East Europe Department to Controller Overseas 'C', 13 August 1959.

¹³⁸ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, L.R. Phillips, Controller, Overseas 'C' to Director Personnel Department, 14 August 1959, Treatment of ex local staff, Romania - referring to BW 53/17, 1693/12/59, British Legation Bucharest to Cultural relations Department, Foreign Office, 27 July 1959.

‘This introduces a new major factor in our relations with the Satellites’, J. Graham, Director of the East Europe Department of the British Council maintained. He suggested that the British Council should send ‘an interim reply stating that the problems raised by their letter are being studied. We should at the same time inform the Foreign Office of our difficulty.’...¹³⁹

For quite apart from moral aspects, there are clear public relations implications – the public, the press and Parliament would be incensed if it were known that in our eagerness to obtain a cultural foothold in Satellite countries we were prepared to ignore all reference to present victimization of ex employees whose only fault was that they had served us well for a few weeks nearly eleven years ago.¹⁴⁰

Why was the Romanian regime adamant about development of cultural contacts? Was it because the leadership wanted to obtain even ‘minimum possible dividend’ from any superficial cultural exchanges? Did they suppose that they would gain ‘additional respectability’ both in the eyes of the Romanians and foreigners? ¹⁴¹

While the French concluded in 1959 a cultural agreement with the Romanians, the British were not interested in signing Cultural Conventions with any of the Soviet Bloc countries. London considered such agreements to be ‘a sort of meaningless window-dressing that appeals to Communist regimes’.¹⁴² ‘We see no reason to indulge them in this respect unless we get some worthwhile quid-pro-quo,’ it was resolved within the Cultural

¹³⁹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, J. Graham, Acting Director East Europe Department to Controller Overseas ‘C’, L. R. Philipps’s minute, 13 August 1959.

¹⁴⁰ ‘The whole question of our relations with the Satellites is bristling with difficulties....we have already asked for a meeting with the Foreign Office on the Satellites, so that policy and the mechanism of procedure may be discussed. But it is equally important in my view that we should have the full understanding and endorsement of the Executive Committee with regard to work in the Satellite countries before we go further.’ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, J. Graham, Acting Director East Europe Department to Controller Overseas ‘C’, Philipps’s minute, 13 August 1959; K.R.J.’s minute: ‘I am absolutely in agreement with your main point as regards Romania.’

¹⁴¹ The Romanians seemed anxious for cultural agreements with Western countries because they feel that they give them a little extra international respectability. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R.D.J. Scott Fox, British Embassy, Bucharest to R.L. Speaight, 21 September 1959.

¹⁴² In July 1959 a French-Roumanian cultural agreement was concluded, providing for an exchange of university professors and students. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, British Legation Bucharest to Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office, 27 July 1959.

Relations Department of the Foreign Office.¹⁴³ The Legation was instructed to take the line that any such things were premature. 'Our present view is that, quite apart from the serious practical and financial difficulties, this is better left over until the Romanians have begun to show greater goodwill in cultural matters.'¹⁴⁴

Although insisting at every opportunity on improved cultural relations, the Romanians failed to put forward suggestions for cultural exchanges. '[R]unning true to form by taking their cue from the Russians' on wider contacts with the Western countries,' they did not translate this aspiration 'into something more tangible, particularly in cultural and economic matters'.¹⁴⁵ They may have been inhibited by the dusty answer to their proposals for the resumption of trade and financial negotiations. Romanian inertia made the Foreign Office decide to take the initiative in discussing the general question of cultural relations 'before the atmosphere deteriorated further'.¹⁴⁶ While the British Council resolved that it was unable to collaborate with an agency of the Romanian Government while ex-employees were still incarcerated, the Foreign Office tended to view this argument as irrelevant.¹⁴⁷ Apparently, 'Foreign Office policy considerations' were allowed to override the British Council arguments.¹⁴⁸

According to the British Council, establishing relations without overt reference to imprisoned ex-employees was like proclaiming to the Romanians 'that we are prepared to

¹⁴³ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, R.L. Speaight to B.M.H. Tripp, British Council, 5 October 1959.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relation Department, Foreign Office, to R. D. J. Scott Fox, 12 October 1959.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R.D.J. Scott Fox, British Embassy Bucharest, to R.L. Speaight, C.M.G., FO, 18 September 1959.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, J. Graham, East Europe Department, to Director, East Europe Department, Controller Overseas 'C', 28 September 1959. Cultural exchanges proposed to the Romanian government included books, films, incoming and outgoing visitors.

¹⁴⁷ G.M. Warr, H. Carr and McAlpine from the Cultural Relations Department, FO, at a meeting held on 21 August 1959. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, L.R. Phillips, Controller Overseas 'C', to D.G., 29 September 1959. Work in the Satellites.

¹⁴⁸ 'The fact that ex local employees in Romania are still in gaol introduces a major factor in relations with the satellites.' TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, L.R. Phillips, Controller, Overseas 'C' to DDG, 14 August 1959; L.R. Phillips, Controller, Overseas 'C' to G.M. Warr, Cultural Relations Department, FO, 17 August 1959.

swallow anything.’ Two factors prohibited any direct cultural contacts between the British Council and the Romanian Institute for Cultural Affairs: ‘the nature of our expulsion from Romania in 1949’ and the fact that Romanians working for the British Council were still in gaol after nearly ten years.¹⁴⁹ While agreeing to indirect cultural exchanges which were subject to changes, the British Council asked the British Minister in Bucharest to underline for the Romanians the importance it ascribed to the release of its ex-employees.¹⁵⁰

When Ambassador Scott Fox raised the issue, he was assured that the Romanian Ministry of the Interior would be reviewing the cases in which the British were interested. Although the amnesty decreed on 23 August 1959 did not apply to the sort of offences with which the British Council’s former employees were charged, he might consider releases on other grounds such as individual good behaviour. ‘This may or may not lead to the release of one or two of the Council’s former employees; but, however it goes, I shall keep up the pressure here for a clean sweep of all these cases,’ Scott Fox reported.¹⁵¹ Clemency for the detainees who had worked for the British and Americans was mentioned in a note of the Ministry of the Interior as likely to encourage an ‘atmosphere propitious for the improvement of relations with the Capitalist countries’.¹⁵²

One hundred and nineteen persons indicted for their connection with Britain remained imprisoned in 1959, according to Romanian statistics.¹⁵³ Some of them had been released in 1955 just to be re-incarcerated shortly thereafter for spreading prohibited

¹⁴⁹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, L.R. Phillips, Controller, Overseas ‘C’ to DG, 29 September 1959.

¹⁵⁰ Although unwilling ‘at this stage’ to enter into direct relationships with the Satellites,’ the British Council was not against an indirect contact through Cultural Relations, Embassy or legation channel. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, L.R. Phillips, Controller Overseas ‘C’ Division, to R.L. Speaight, CMG, Cultural Relations Department, 12 October 1959.

¹⁵¹ ‘I am copying this letter to Tony Lambert at Sofia whose problems in cultural field seem more comparable to mine than those in the other Eastern European countries.’ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R.D.J. Scott Fox, British Embassy Bucharest, to R.L. Speaight, C.M.G., FO, 18 September 1959.

¹⁵² Note of 23 September 1959 signed by Avram Bunaciu. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 154-155.

¹⁵³ Some of them worked at ‘Unirea’ or ‘Astra’ companies. ‘Situation of certain Romanian citizens condemned by the Romanian authorities for various crimes of whom the British Legation is interested in,’ 26 April 1959. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 61-93.

publications or carrying on clandestine trade.¹⁵⁴ Such was the case of Rose Frances Sussman. Arrested in February 1954 and condemned for espionage, she was released in October 1955 -- probably during the amnesty preceding Romania's admission into the United Nations -- and was re-arrested three years later for having sold items on the black-market.¹⁵⁵ Gheorghe Balica and Anna Borbath were also condemned in 1958 for clandestine trade.¹⁵⁶ Commonly, the new indictment was related to selling personal goods to survive. These individuals were caught up during a wave of persecution directed against the former bourgeoisie. By prohibiting the sale of any items on the so-called 'black market', the authorities denied any means of survival to the members of the bourgeoisie not already imprisoned.¹⁵⁷ One victim of the regime later recalled: '[o]ur class of people was never forgiven and any releases were only temporary. They were inevitably hauled back even though years after. During that twenty-two months in my first cell eight hundred people went home and about half of these returned again.'¹⁵⁸

Until the end of 1954 and the signing of the Vienna State Treaty, terror continued inside the prisons as outside them. Kirschen, the Associated Press correspondent recalled:

There was a distinct revolutionary period which differed from the blood bath of the Russian revolution only in the methods of extermination . . . We were encouraged to die of our own free will although we were not allowed to commit suicide or die from hunger-striking . . . the order had been to kill us off as quickly as possible but without marks of physical cruelty. Starving or working to death was the general directive. The inhumanity in Roumanian prisons and working colonies reached extremes in the winters of 1951 to 1952 and 1952 to 1953 . . . The warders were told that we were bandits, the dregs of society and that we had been trying to steal those good things from them which the new regime was now providing. They were told to shout at us, to swear at us, to use the stick whenever

¹⁵⁴ NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 9-10.

¹⁵⁵ NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 42; TNA, PRO, FO 371/122756, N R 1903/3, FO Minute (Hohler to Lord John Hope), 9 February 1956: Farwell luncheon for the Romanian Minister, Babuci, hosted by Lord John Hope.

¹⁵⁶ 'Situation of certain Romanian citizens condemned by the Romanian authorities for various crimes of whom the British Legation is interested in.' 26 April 1959. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 28.

¹⁵⁷ Leonard Kirschen's parents like many others sold all their valuable personal items to survive. Leonard Kirschen, *Prisoner of Red Justice. An account of Ten Years; Captivity in Communist Romania*, Barker, London, 1963.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

possible and to give us days of solitary confinement for nothing whatever, in order to enforce discipline and prevent any possibility of our gaining courage.¹⁵⁹

In November 1959 the British Minister reported that the Romanians were about to approach the British Council for a settlement of past differences.¹⁶⁰ Though, there was no clear answer coming from the Romanians on the issue of detainees. In March 1960 the British Council resolved that the time had come for an approach on the detainee problem considerably more explicit than previously.¹⁶¹ They were determined not go further in their modest programme for Romania until an explicit request was made by the Legation on their behalf.¹⁶² The issue of the former employees detained had become just 'a ritual of question and answer between the Legation and the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs', whereas it remained an issue of great importance for the British Council.

Either we must take this controversy seriously or we must realistically call it a day and decide to proceed with the development of cultural relations as if this obstacle did not exist. . . . If the Foreign Office think that we are making too much fuss and wish us to get on with cultural relations they must tell us so, and we must consider whether or not we are going to adopt their view. . . .¹⁶³

The view of the Foreign Office remained that 'immediate ends are more important than the misfortunes of ex British Council staff. In a way they are right in the same way that a general should not be turned from an important objective by the thought of the hardship to be borne by the troops taking part.' What made the British Council indignant however was its conviction that the position of its former staff was treated 'as a routine

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 141-143.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, British Legation Bucharest to Northern Department, Foreign Office, 16 November 1959.

¹⁶¹ 'Are we preparing to embark on even the most programme proposed for Romania without any attempt to clear the air with regard the detainees?' TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, J. Graham, East Europe Department, to Controller Overseas 'C' Division, 11 March 1960; Controller Overseas 'C's minute.

¹⁶² TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, L.R. Philips, the Controller Overseas 'C', Minute, 22 March 1960.

Johnstone suggested that the Council should collaborate with the F.O. in composing a letter to Bucharest on this question. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, J. Graham, Acting Director, East Europe Department, to Henry Carr, Cultural Relation Department, Foreign Office, 25 March 1960.

¹⁶³ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, DDG - Johnstone (KRJ) to Controller Overseas 'C', 31 August 1960.

hoary representation that has from time to time to be made by the Legation, but without any real conviction behind it'.¹⁶⁴

In March 1960 the correspondent of the Associated Press Agency, Leonard Kirschen, and a Romanian citizen of British nationality, Valentin Sarry were released. Sarry had been arrested in 1949 for espionage and condemned to fifteen years imprisonment.¹⁶⁵ Kirschen was accused by the Romanian authorities of espionage. He had been allegedly recruited by Colonel Harold Gibson and was accused of having provided military and economic information to Robinson from the British legation and of having recommended individuals to be recruited as agents. The accusations brought him a harsh sentence: twenty five years imprisonment.¹⁶⁶ The Foreign Office and the Associated Press Agency intervened repeatedly for Kirschen's release. The latter refused to appoint a new correspondent in Bucharest or make public any news concerning Romania until he was released.¹⁶⁷ Kirschen's uncle appealed to the Great Men of the days, Eisenhower and Churchill. Learning about the Soviet leaders' visit in Britain in 1956, he lobbied the Foreign Office on the assumption that the Romanians would act on the Soviet leaders' orders whose intervention the British would be able to obtain.¹⁶⁸ After being released both men left Romania for Britain immediately.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ 'Could we not have a frank talk on this subject with the Romanian Minister here in London, first informing the Foreign Office that we intend to do so?' TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, L.R. Phillips, Controller Overseas 'C', British Council, 2 September 1960.

¹⁶⁵ Note of 15 December 1961 on the persons released from prison at the request of the British Legation in Bucharest, NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 7.

¹⁶⁶ List of the persons proved to have activated for the British Intelligence, 4 April 1957, Ibid., f. 79.

¹⁶⁷ Note of 23 September 1959. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 154-5.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, N R 1015/4, Henry Kirschen's letter; FO 371/122694, N R 1015/12. Henry Kirschen to W. Churchill, 20 April 1956. FO's draft answer to Miss Sturdee, Churchill's Private Secretary, 16 May 1956: "The form of words to be used in answer to similar enquiries would be: 'We are declining to give any information as to whether it was possible to accede to the request to take the matter up with the Soviet leaders'."

¹⁶⁹ NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 7, Note of 15 December 1961 on the persons released from prison at the request of the British Legation in Bucharest and f. 79, List of the persons that activated for the British Intelligence, 4 April 1957.

Although it represented a ‘stumbling-block’ to a limited resumption of cultural relations with Romania, the new Director of the East Europe Department was not sure that locally-employed Council staffs were arrested and still in prison. She was determined to establish whether that ‘oral tradition’ was based ‘on fact or fantasy’.¹⁷⁰ Since many files had been destroyed when the Information Section was removed from Bucharest nobody could provide a full list of former employees.¹⁷¹

The British Minister in Bucharest announced on 2 December 1960 the release of ‘a considerable number of political detainees’ meanwhile indicating that the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was on the point of submitting proposals for increasing cultural exchanges. Reports of recent releases ‘might portend some good news for the detainees in whom we had a special interest,’ the British Ambassador told to a Romanian official. The latter replied however that he not heard anything about a special measure of clemency, although, the Ministry of Interior was authorised to examine individual cases and to remit sentences where appropriate. ‘He promised to enquire again how matters were progressing and to inform me on the result of his enquiries in due course. I have since heard a rumour which I shall endeavour to confirm that two sisters formerly employed by the United States

¹⁷⁰ ‘The stumbling-block to a limited resumption of cultural relations with Romania is the fact that, for the last ten years, there has been a strong oral tradition within H.M. Legation, Bucharest, that locally-employed Council staff were arrested after your withdrawal and are still in prison more than ten years later. We now consider that it is time to establish finally whether this oral tradition is based on fact or fantasy.’ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, B.M.H. Tripp, Director, East Europe Department to T.W. Morray, The Representative, The British Council, Beirut, Lebanon, 8 November 1960.

¹⁷¹ Two individuals, Ion Has and Vasile Nicolau, appointed in November 1947 were transferred in March 1948 to the Information Office of the Legation. The Council continued to pay them until April 1950 when they were given three months’ salary in lieu of notice. Other staff’s member was Barbu Cretu, described as chauffeur who was given a month’s salary in lieu of notice in March 1948. There was no trace in the British Council files of Goleescu, Samuelli and Mugur,’ the Director, East Europe Department, Tripp, mentioned in his despatch to Speaight from the Cultural Relations Department, FO. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, 8 November 1960.

Asked for details concerning the staff he employed in Bucharest, the former British Council Representative, Morray, confirmed three names. The Council had to enquire R.F.G. Sarell who acted as Charge d’ Affairs in 1947, 1948, and 1949 and Francis Bennet, formerly in the Information Section in Bucharest. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, T.W. Morray, the Representative, the British Council Lebanon, Beirut, to B.M.H. Tripp, Director, East Europe Department, 15 November 1960.

legation and ourselves are among those who have now been released.’¹⁷² This was however just a rumour.

Although the British Council postponed the offer of scholarships for which provision had already been made in the budget, the British Ambassador continued to make efforts to persuade the Romanians to agree to cooperate in arranging short visits and to allow one or two people to take up the offer of scholarships. He recommended to London that a similar provision be included in the future.¹⁷³ For 1961, the British Council allocated a budget of 1,300 pounds to Romania. Of this, 580 pounds was set aside for two scholarships; the remaining amount remained unallocated. Expenditure depended to a large extent ‘on whether the problem of the alleged imprisonment of Council local staff could be solved in the near future’.¹⁷⁴

In February 1961, the Foreign Office decided to step up cultural contacts with all the Soviet Satellites as ‘one of the few ways in which we can make our influence felt’.

We no longer insist on linking a cultural exchange programme with the cessation of jamming since it is clear that that would be an effective bar to progress. Nor do we consider it in our best interests to postpone further developments with Romania until all the former British employees are again at liberty.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CR 1372/4, M.S. Satterly, Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office, to R.K. Tongue, Regional Officer, British Council, 19 January [1961]. This despatch has two different dates: the date printed on the right top is 19 January 1960; a stamp refers to another date, 27 January 1959. The despatch mentions Scott Fox’s call at the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 2 December 1960. At its end, the despatch also refers to ‘the proposals for increasing cultural exchanges’ and the Chancery’s letter 1751 S of 12 December 1960, of which a copy was sent to the British Council.

¹⁷³ ‘It seems to me that the arguments as to the advantage of inward and outward visits are nicely balanced, particularly in the case of Romania where the authorities go to such pains to hand-pick any visitors whom they allow to go to foreign countries.’.....my preference would be to see a fair balance kept between the provision made for expenditure on visitors to Britain and that for visitors from Britain. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R.D.J. Scott Fox, British Embassy Bucharest to R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office, 25 June 1960.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, R.K. Tongue, Regional Officer, East Europe Department, to R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office, 2 December 1960.

While Czechoslovakia was allocated over 3,000 pounds, Hungary about 4,000, Bulgaria 1,316, Romania was at the bottom of the list with 1,310 pounds. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/GEN/684/10A.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CR 1371/2, R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office to R.D.J. Scott Fox, 8 February 1961 referring to the Romanians’ proposal for cultural exchanges mentioned in the Chancery letter of 12 December 1960.

The fact that some people had been released was considered enough for 'making a start'. Accordingly, the British Ambassador submitted to the Romanian Foreign Ministry an unofficial note of British Council undertakings for 1961/2 and invited the Romanians to submit to him a note of their own proposals for cultural exchanges. The British Council had at their disposal 20,000 pounds for all four Satellites in 1961. Hungary and Czechoslovakia came first on the list, followed by Bulgaria, 'where the authorities have proved unexpectedly cooperative'. The Romanians came last.¹⁷⁶ The programme of cultural exchanges included two scholarships offered to post-graduate students, summer courses and visits of specialists. The British Council was still reluctant to admit a regular cultural agreement in treaty form or through an exchange of letters.¹⁷⁷

Until we are able to develop cultural exchanges on a wider scale, we are not prepared to conclude such agreements with any of the Satellites. Nor can we accept an exchange programme on a basis of reciprocity as the Romanians contemplate. It is one thing to do this with a country of equal stature like the Soviet Union, but quite unrealistic to expect us to deal on equal cultural terms with a country like Romania whose cultural, scientific and intellectual achievements evoke very limited interest in Britain and whose academic institutions have little appeal for British students.¹⁷⁸

The issue of the former employees imprisoned was approached by the new Minister in Bucharest, J. Dalton Murray, on the occasion of presenting his credentials to Gheorghiu-Dej in October 1961. A release would contribute to the further improvement of relations between the two countries, Murray pointed out.¹⁷⁹ In a letter to the Minister of

¹⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CR 1371/2, R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, FO, to R.D.J. Scott Fox, 8 February 1961.

¹⁷⁷ 'The American exchange of letters, although in principle based on reciprocity, really commits the Americans to nothing at all, since no exchanges are specified: indeed the American letter seems to consist largely of window dressing of a type which we do not ourselves consider very profitable. Even the undertaking to promote the commercial sale of books, which seems at first sight a worthwhile concession from the Romanians, would be a dangerous commitment for us if made reciprocal since the possibilities of promoting Romanian book sales in the UK must be almost nil.' TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CR 1371/2, R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office to R.D.J. Scott Fox, 8 February 1961.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CR 1371/2, R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office to R.D.J. Scott Fox, 8 February 1961.

¹⁷⁹ Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the former employees of the British Information Office condemned for espionage, 9 May 1962. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 94.

Foreign Affairs, Corneliu Manescu, Murray referred to the promises made in June 1961 to his predecessor, Scott Fox, concerning the former employees of the legation, and mentioned Constantin Mugur, Paul Bandu, Annie Samuelli, Gheorghe Gelu Balica, Ion Vorvoreanu, Ludwig Parvu, Sergiu Godeanu¹⁸⁰ and Maria Golescu as individuals in whom the British retained particular interest.¹⁸¹

Annie Samuelli and her sister, Nora, who worked for the British Press Office and the American Press Office respectively condemned to twenty years imprisonment for espionage, were released during the year 1961.¹⁸² At the end of 1961 Constantin Mugur,¹⁸³ one time chief of the Romanian staff of the British library, and sentenced to life imprisonment was also released.¹⁸⁴ Paul Bandu was released in 1962, as were Balica, Parvu, Gheorghe Radulescu, Radu Florescu¹⁸⁵ and Elvira Olteanu.¹⁸⁶ Bandu, a student at the time he served as a courier between the British Consul in Constanta and the legation in Bucharest, was arrested in 1949 and charged with espionage.¹⁸⁷ Maria Golescu, Director of

¹⁸⁰ Godeanu was the former legal adviser of the British legation.

¹⁸¹ The British lost track of certain employees; such as the servant-keeper of the former British military attaché, Ludwig Parvu, who simply disappeared in 1954. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 94-98, Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the former employees of the British Information Office condemned for espionage. 9 May 1962.

¹⁸² Annie Samuelli(i), b. 14 August 1910, in Ploiesti, was arrested in 1949 and released on 14 June 1961 from the prison Miercurea-Ciuc. Upon their release, both Annie and her sister left Romania for France. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 4.

Five years after being released she wrote a book, published in the U.S. in 1967. The book's purpose was, according to the author (Introduction of the book), not to describe the detention 'regime', but rather to point out the means of survival discovered by the community of women imprisoned and subjected to extermination in Communist prisons. *Women Behind Bars in Romania* was translated and published in Romania in 1992 and 2001. Annie Samuelli, *Gratiile despartitoare [Women Behind Bars in Romania]*, Fundatia Culturala Memoria, Bucharest, 2001.

¹⁸³ Recruited by the British Intelligence in September 1943, Mugur provided economic, political and military information. Securitate files, Note of 23 September 1957. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 137—142.

¹⁸⁴ Arrested on 25 July 1949, Mugur was tried in April 1950 together with Bunea, the sisters Samuelli and Nasta. After his release, he left the country. Note of 15 December 1961 on the persons released from prison at the request of the British Legation. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 7; ff. 11-17 and f.138.

¹⁸⁵ Situation on certain Romanian citizens condemned by the Romanian authorities for various crimes, 26 April 1959. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, ff. 31-32.

¹⁸⁶ Elvira Olteanu, a former employee of the American mission, was accused of having taken part in 'reactionary' plots. Burton Y. Berry, *Romanian Diaries, 1944-1947*, p. 451.

¹⁸⁷ Bandu was, according to Romanian authorities, recruited by the former British Consul, Stanley Coomes, to work for British intelligence. Situation of certain Romanian citizens condemned by the Romanian authorities for various crimes, 26 April 1959. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 28.

the British Council library in Bucharest, and transferred to the Information Office in 1948,¹⁸⁸ was released 'with four some others' on 19 June 1962 after thirteen years of imprisonment. She was arrested in 1949 and condemned to twenty years forced labour for high treason.¹⁸⁹ A few months after being released she was allowed to leave Romania together with her mother. By the time Goleescu arrived in Britain she was sixty four and her aged mother ninety three; all the files concerning her employment had been destroyed and the Foreign Office bound by Treasury regulations could do nothing more than pay her a small lump sum.¹⁹⁰ Among the last political prisoners released in 1964 were the former employees of the oil companies. They would not be prevented from leaving Romania, Gheorghiu-Dej told Murray.¹⁹¹

By 1963, the newly appointed British Ambassador to Bucharest, J.D. Murray, judged that the issue of the former employees had been essentially resolved.¹⁹² He advised London not to encourage anti-Romanian publicity at a time when 'we have, for good

¹⁸⁸ Previous to being charged with espionage, Goleescu was put under charge with sabotage for not delivering sufficient wheat on her 50 hectare farm. TNA, PRO, FO 1110/97, PR 632/G PR (Information Research Department), 21 October 1948.

TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, NR 1892, R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, FO, to B.M.H. Tripp, Director, East Europe Department, 20 January 1961.

¹⁸⁹ 'Situation of certain Romanian citizens condemned by the Romanian authorities for various crimes of whom the British Legation is interested in.' 26 April 1959. NCSSA, Documentary Fond, Dossier 13.434, vol. 7, f. 28.

Goleescu also was the subject of Hohler's letter to MacDermott in 22 March 1956. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122694, 1015/25.

¹⁹⁰ Tripp asked the Director of Pay & Records if they could trace any reference to Goleescu's employment in Romania and check the length of time Goleescu was employed by the British Council. Pay and Records replied that they kept nominal rolls and salary information for only two years. The Accounts Department kept their copies of monthly salaries for fifteen years. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, B.M.H. Tripp, Director, East Europe to Director, Pay & Records, 2 November 1962.

¹⁹¹ The chief of staff at the Astra-Romana, Constantin Capsa, sentenced to life imprisonment, was released from prison in 1964, following the general amnesty. Capsa requested to be allowed to leave Romania for Britain together with his dependents. Along with Gheorghe Lingner and Gheorghe Paliuc, Capsa's case was addressed during the visit of the Minister of State, George Thomson, to Romania. The Shell Company offered to support its former employees financially. The case of Gheorghe Tomaziu was also addressed. Tomaziu 'rendered great service to the Allied cause against the Germans during the war, always refusing payment for it.' He was imprisoned between 1950 and 1963 on charges of spying for the British. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Brief no. R6, Visit of the Minister of State to Romania, 2-7 October, 1965.

¹⁹² Representations continued to be made on behalf of the former employees who wished to leave Romania. Most of them were given exit documents. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Brief No. R6, Visit of the Minister of State to Romania, 2-7 October 1965, Romanian personal cases.

reasons, adopted a forward policy towards all the satellites, including Romania'.¹⁹³ Indicating the efforts of the Romanian regime to obtain independence from Moscow, Murray suggested patience 'in the hope that, as they achieve more self-confidence, they will begin to behave less brutally towards opponents among their own people. They are in an extremely sensitive mood at the moment, looking for signs of encouragement from the West and perhaps from us in particular, and are unduly upset by adverse publicity.'¹⁹⁴ The 1961 policy paper envisaged a dual approach to the Satellites. 'While we would try to increase contacts of all kinds, this would not preclude us from continuing to expose those factors of Satellite policy which were directed against our interests or which we found particularly objectionable.' The point should be made clear in the new Satellite policy paper, Murray maintained, suggesting that IRD should take 'a new look' at its general terms of operation.¹⁹⁵ The Ambassador considered that '[a] number of things' which happened in Eastern Europe were 'good in themselves and good from the point of view of Britain's interests'.¹⁹⁶

During the visit of a Romanian delegation to London in 1963, the British avoided bringing up sensitive issues. The friendly attitude of the British MPs they met enchanted the Romanians. At a reception given by the Romanian Ambassador in London almost every speaker mentioned the further development of relations between Britain and

¹⁹³ 'I took your point about the distinction between a campaign directed by Her Majesty's Government against Romania and unattributable or private publicity directed to the horrors of prison conditions here, which Vorvoreanu's grim account enclosed with Information Research Department's letter of July 30 has fully confirmed or to other unpleasant activities of this regime. From the account given by Hamish McGhie of recent talks he had in I.R.D. it resulted that the Department took account of developments in Romania's attitude towards the Soviet Union and that the BBC under Maurice Latey are adopting a very balanced and sensible line. TNA, PRO, FO 1110/1645, PR 10137/19 G (A). J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to L.C. Glass, Foreign Office, 5 September 1963.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 1110/1645, PR 10137/19 G (A). J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to L.C. Glass, Foreign Office, 5 September 1963.

¹⁹⁵ I do not think that we would agree that the Test Ban treaty and a temporary period of detente with the Soviet Union would basically alter IRD's role in countering Communist propaganda and subversion. TNA, PRO, FO 1110/1645, PR 10137/19 G, FO minute, R.M. Russell to Barclay and Henderson, 18 September 1963.

¹⁹⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 1110/1645, PR 10137/19 G, FO minutes, J.N. Henderson, 24 September 1963.

Romania, avoiding any controversial ideological issues.¹⁹⁷ Privately the MP Gilbert Longden mentioned the issue of political prisoners. Their release ‘would not present any danger to the regime,’ he assessed since it was firmly established signs of clemency would contribute to the improvement of relations between the two countries. Handing the Romanians a list of people who had requested visas to leave Romania for Britain, Sir Herbert Butcher underlined that the request was grounded not on their disapproval of the regime but family reunification.’¹⁹⁸

Cultural relations had improved steadily since 1962 when the Cultural Exchange Programme was signed. The work of the British Council was supplemented by the East Europe Committee with the official aim of developing cultural relations with Eastern Europe outside the official programmes. The committee was created in early 1963 under the chairmanship of Christopher Mayhew.¹⁹⁹

Application of the exchange agreement was dependent upon the regime’s tolerance of the activities of the British Council, which hoped to function with the same degree of freedom achieved in Yugoslavia and Poland.²⁰⁰ Apparently the Romanian authorities accepted that the Cultural Attaché of the Embassy, David Williams, was a Council Officer.²⁰¹ Williams arrived in Bucharest on 12 September 1964 to take up his

¹⁹⁷ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 7/1963, ff.15-17.

¹⁹⁸ Taking the list, a member of the delegation promised that he would hand it over to the appropriate authorities which would, certainly, examine each case with utmost care. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 7/1963, ff. 24-25.

¹⁹⁹ The Committee set up a group dealing specifically with Romania (there were groups for each of the four East European Countries, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria). The intention was to produce an all-party organization as an alternative to fellow-travelling ‘friendship leagues.’ Attached to the British Council, the committee had as Chairman the MP Gilbert Longden. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Visit of the Minister of State to Romania, 2-7 October 1965. Brief no. R 4.

²⁰⁰ The cultural convention with Yugoslavia created a precedent which made it difficult for the British to resist pressure to do the same with other communist governments.

A cultural convention with Romania to which the two year programme was to be subordinated provided was conditioned by the settlement of the British Council in Bucharest. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R.L. Speaight, Cultural Relations Department, FO, to R. Brash, Bucharest, 15 March 1965.

²⁰¹ ‘We should like to take matters one step further and have him officially described in the diplomatic list and elsewhere as ‘Cultural Attaché and British Council Representative’. We should naturally expect such recognition would eventually lead to the setting up of separate Council premises with library,

appointment. His connections with the British Council were not concealed since the Romanian authorities were aware that 'the Council was the instrument for carrying out most of the executive work under the Anglo-Romanians Cultural Agreement.'²⁰² That the Cultural Attaché was in fact a British Council Officer was 'entirely familiar to and accepted by the Romanian authorities' who were looking forward to more effective cultural cooperation.

"You are the British Council Representative, aren't you?," the Head of the Cultural Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Williams. The British Ambassador explained that while Williams was a British Council employee seconded to work on cultural matters on the Embassy staff, he should not be thought of as the British Council Representative in Bucharest.'²⁰³

The Foreign Office seemed to agree to go 'one further than in Budapest and Prague and call him a representative with a capital 'R' - if the Romanians really do not object. It would establish a valuable precedent'.²⁰⁴ There was hope that in the course of time it might be possible to negotiate for the establishment of a British Office Council in Bucharest 'separate from and independent of the Embassy'.²⁰⁵

Although cultural exchanges developed providing for exchanges of postgraduates, research workers and specialists of various sorts,²⁰⁶ the meagre imports of British books

reading room etc., but that will be for the future as there is no money for anything of the sort in the 1965/66 budget.' TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, FO, R.L. Speaight to R. Brash, 15 March 1965.

²⁰² 'While I can see that there may be reasons at other Iron Curtain capitals for suppressing the fact that the Cultural Attaché at the British Embassy is seconded from the British Council there is no need for this in Romania. TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to R. L. Speaight, C.M.G., Foreign Office, 24 September 1964.

²⁰³ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to R. L. Speaight, C.M.G., Foreign Office, 24 September 1964.

²⁰⁴ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, R. L. Speaight, C.M.G., Foreign Office to B.M.H. Tripp, O.B.E. British Council, 28 September 1964.

²⁰⁵ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to R. L. Speaight, C.M.G., Foreign Office, 24 September 1964.

²⁰⁶ The Anglo-Romanian programme for 1965-7 provided for the exchange of postgraduates, researchers, agricultural and medical specialists, writers and librarians, lecturers and cinema workers. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182727, NR 1631/16, FO submission, 24 October 1965, Call on the Secretary of State by Mr. Mikardo.

and periodicals was a disappointment.²⁰⁷ More vexing were the bureaucratic obstacles that impeded the work of the Cultural Attaché. All his contact with Romanians had to be orchestrated through the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁰⁸ 'In this respect Romania is behind all the rest of Eastern Europe with the possible exception of Bulgaria. Not only in Budapest and Prague, but also in Moscow members of the Embassy can and do invite locals direct to parties. No doubt, the locals have to get permission before accepting, but this is their own affair.'²⁰⁹ Despite the administrative inefficiency impeding on cultural contacts²¹⁰ the exchange programme was 'reasonably active'²¹¹ and a British lecturer was accepted at the Bucharest University.²¹²

After a decade of isolation the Romanian government approached the West to resume cultural ties. That the French and the Americans proved to be more amenable to signing formal cultural agreements than the British reluctance stemmed from two issues: unwillingness to proceed on an issue of consequence to Romania (culture) before some headway had been made in the commercial and financial negotiations important to Britain; and a disinclination to create new cultural links while employees associated with previous

²⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/17, R. Brash, Bucharest, to P.A. Rhodes, 9 August 1965, Minister of State's visit to Bucharest, General Briefing.

²⁰⁸ The Romanians assured that there was no discrimination involved and that all other missions were treated in the same way. 'I agree that the restrictions imposed upon us are irksome, but the Romanians see it as in their major interest to maintain them upon the diplomatic corps in general and they clearly have an eye, particularly upon the Russians and the Chinese, possibly also the Hungarians... in the circumstances it does not seem to me worth while pressing too vigorously.' TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CR 1321/18 A, British Embassy Bucharest, 12 November 1965.

²⁰⁹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, FO, 29 October 1965.

²¹⁰ 'Like the Bulgarians, they [the Romanians] find it hard to understand that HMG cannot influence impresarios, theatre companies, publishing houses or art galleries, and therefore cannot commit themselves in the cultural exchange programme to accepting specific Romanian cultural manifestations. The Romanians are however more willing than the Bulgarians to compromise and to accept ad hoc arrangements as the occasion arises during the course of the programme.' TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Visit of the Minister of State to Romania, 2-7 October 1965. Brief no. R 4. Anglo-Romanian cultural Relations, Talking Points.

²¹¹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CR 1321/18 A, British Embassy Bucharest, 12 November 1965.

The new programme signed in Bucharest in April provided for an expansion of exchanges. The British intended to send to Romania in 1966 an exhibition of sculptor Henry Moore. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Visit of the Minister of State to Romania, 2-7 October 1965. Brief no. R 4. Anglo-Romanian cultural Relations.

²¹² TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/7, FO Minute, P.A. Rhodes, 9 July 1965, Programme for Minister of State's visit to Romania 2-7 October 1965.

initiatives remained imprisoned. A compromise emerged in the early 1960s when the Foreign Office, brushing aside the British Council whose stance was that the imprisonment of their former employees prohibited any direct cultural liaison with Romania, decided on the resumption of limited cultural relations with Romania. The Romanians responded by releasing, in stages, those individuals in which the British were primarily interested. Although the process was slow, by the time most of detainees were released, cultural relations were established on solid ground.

Looking at Romania through the wrong end of the telescope

‘The time for Romania being a *hinterland* [of the Soviet Union] has gone. Romania is now an independent and sovereign country which takes decisions according to its own interests.’ (Gheorghiu-Dej, 1963)¹

Nothing in the political evolution of Romania in the 1950s could have surprised the British representatives in Bucharest who wrote their reports without much trouble since the Romanian leaders consented to all Soviet policies, following a predictable line.² In London, Romania was perceived as the most subservient of all satellites. No evidence was found to contradict this assessment.³ At the beginning of the 1960s the situation changed since Romanian leaders were constantly challenging the Soviets. Patrick Gordon Walker, the Labour Shadow Foreign Minister, remarked in 1964 that the Sino-Soviet conflict enabled other Communist countries to assert their own independence.⁴

Romania’s idiosyncratic stance during the long Sino-Soviet dispute was one way in which a new desire for independence was asserted. From 1960 Romanians had refused

¹ Gheorghiu-Dej at the meeting of the Politburo, 5 December 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 58/1963, f. 6.

² ‘Romania has been a ‘Yes-man’ for so long.’ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/3, J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to Howard Smith, Northern Department, Foreign Office, 15 January 1964.

³ According to the FO, Romania was ‘one of the most unregenerate’ and ‘the most servile of all satellites to the USSR,’ with a government ‘not really sovereign’ but obedient to Soviet leaders. TNA, PRO, FO 371/122709, f. 5.

⁴ The Romanian leadership took advantage of the situation to promote a nationalistic policy, Gordon Walker assessed. Lazareanu to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 March 1964. RDA, London – Telegrams, Dossier 216/1964, vol. 2, f. 36 cited by Constantin Moraru, *Politica externa a Romaniei, 1958-1964*, p. 96.

to be drawn into public ostracism of the Chinese.⁵ Three years later, the Sino-Soviet issue had not been resolved and both parties remained intransigent.

In July 1960 the Soviets recalled all their experts from China. The withdrawal of the Soviet councillors and the cancellation of economic agreements which resulted in about 200 enterprises being abandoned was perceived to be a punishment, an economic sanction. 'Is this consistent with international socialism?' the Chinese asked the Romanian delegation a few years later. When the Romanians repeated the Soviets' version that the Chinese councillors were put in a delicate situation, the Chinese 'jumped up and shouted at us as if we were Soviets, saying "That is not true... Not even a bourgeois state would do what the Soviet Union did to us!"'⁶

At the beginning of their dispute with the Soviets, the Chinese did not intend to make the controversy public. Khrushchev, however, stated that exposing disagreements was the Leninist way to clarify any divergence. The Chinese quickly went public thereafter.⁷ The Soviets appear to have believed themselves to be on the defensive and assessed that it was the Chinese who refused all compromise. On only two issues did the Soviet leadership believe themselves to have no room for manoeuvre: they would never give the Chinese the atomic bomb, on the grounds that this would start a world war; and they would never abandon the principles of Marxist-Leninism in the face of Maoist revisionism. On these issues, likewise, the Chinese were unwilling to compromise, and quickly added to the list of disputed items. 'If others would agree, that's ok; if not, so be it,

⁵ In June 1960 Khrushchev accused the Chinese and Albanian leaders of being dogmatic 'left adventurers' willing to unleash war. A conference convened in Moscow in November 1960 produced a declaration of common principles which accomplished nothing except papering over the cracks. John Dornberg, *Brezhnev: The masks of power*, Vikas Publishing House, 1974, p. 218.

⁶ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 14/1964, ff. 13-14.

⁷ Gheorghiu-Dej's assessment in the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CC or RWP, 30 March 1964, Mircea Chiritoiu, "Esecul romanesc al polemicii soviet-chineze," *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 6 (11), 1997, p. 64.

the sky won't fall! Women will continue to give birth to children, birds will fly and fish will continue to swim.'⁸ On 14 June 1963 the Chinese addressed an open letter to the Soviets, entitled 'Proposals concerning the general line of the international communist movement,' It contained twenty five items; the twenty first issue criticized Soviet Bloc economic integration. The Chinese intention, very probably, was to fish for support within COMECON.⁹

From the perspective of Bucharest, Moscow's position seemed to be a repetition of previous acts of bullying. The Sino-Soviet conflict made Gheorghiu-Dej recall the earlier split with Yugoslavia, and the ferocious anti-Tito propaganda emanating from Moscow at that time. He recalled, as well, the improvement of Romania's relations with the Yugoslavs occasioned by the split. 'I don't even remember what we said to the Yugoslavs and now we *kiss* them.'¹⁰ He admitted that Romania's leadership had also 'thrown rocks in the Yugoslavians' heads,' as required by Moscow, and believed that the time of slavish compliance with Soviet demands was over.¹¹ Labels such as 'Trotskyism,' 'renegade,' 'deviationist' should not be applied to any Communist Party founded on Marxism-Leninism principles. A Communist Party should not be excommunicated 'just like that'. 'Even the Pope does not work this way.'¹² There had been a time when Soviet requirements were received with great respect' by the Chinese, the Romanians recalled.

⁸ Memorandum of conversation between Andropov and the Romanian leaders, Bucharest, 2 April 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 13/1963, f. 12.

⁹ This thesis is maintained by Bogzan based on similarities between the argumentation used by Gheorghiu-Dej during his meeting with N. Podgornii, on 4 June, and China's subsequent criticism. The arguments against economic integration would have had the purpose of supporting the Romanian view within Comecon. Ovidiu Bogzan, "China si *duelul* romano-sovietic la inceputul anilor 60" [China and the Romanian-Soviet duel at the beginning of the 1960s], *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 6 (11)/1997, p. 44.

¹⁰ Record of the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party, 15-22 April 1964 [emphasis added]. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, f. 4.

¹¹ During Stalin's regime, Gheorghiu-Dej agreed to present a report at the Cominform meeting of 1948 about 'the Communist Party from Yugoslavia in the murderers and spies' hands.' The title was dictated by Stalin himself. The transcript of the conversation between Gheorghiu Dej and Gollan, 7-8 April 1964. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 14/1964, ff. 21-22.

¹² RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, f. 40.

How had this 'love' turned into hatred?¹³ Gradually the Soviet and the Chinese positions had become irreconcilable.

It is hardly surprising that the Romanian leadership tended to sympathize with the plight of the Peoples' Republic of China. 'Our heart shrunk from pain for the leaders of the Soviet Communist Party do not behave responsibly', Gheorghiu-Dej told the Chinese Ambassador recalling Khrushchev's assessments that Mao-Tze-dun's theories counted as much as a broken shoe. Statements like that were made only because a brother party had sought to make an independent contribution to socialist theory? 'Who gave them [the Soviets] the monopoly on enriching the Marxism-Leninism?' Gheorghiu-Dej wondered.¹⁴

The Romanians publicly announced their willingness to mediate the Sino-Soviet dispute in 1963. However, understanding Maoist rhetoric proved to be no easy task. How should statements like 'Let all the flowers bloom, all schools compete' be interpreted?¹⁵ It was equally critical to the Romanian leadership that it manoeuvre in such a manner as to gain increased independence, rather than a new vassalage. 'We will not allow in the future any backstage talks . . . we will not accept chewed things, we will chew them ourselves.'¹⁶ The West had to know this. The rumour that Romania now followed the Chinese line was just 'a contrivance of the bourgeois journalists.' Romania's leadership acted solely 'for the unity of the socialist camp' as stated in the Declarations of the Conferences of Communist

¹³ Pavel Iudin, a Communist propagandist in the Communist Information Bureau, was sent by the Soviets to China to help Mao Tze Dun put order in his thinking. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 14/1964, ff. 7-15.

¹⁴ Memorandum of conversation. Gheorghiu-Dej and Siu Gien Guo, the ambassador of Peoples Republic of China, 12 December 1963, Mircea Chiritoiu, "Esecul romanesc al polemicii soviet-chineze," *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 6 (11), 1997, pp. 60-61.

¹⁵ According to Gheorghiu-Dej, the Chinese followed the teaching of Cian Kai-Sheh, while preserving features such as war communism. This was obvious when analyzing the Chinese revolution which started 'not from the centre, but from the periphery, from the soldiers. But who were they? They were peasants. So the peasantry, not the proletariat started the revolution.' Record of the meeting between Gheorghiu-Dej and Gollan, the general secretary of the British Communist Party, 7-8 April 1964. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 14/1964, ff. 15-19.

¹⁶ Plenary of 15-22 April 1964, RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, ff. 37-40.

Parties held in Moscow in 1957 and 1960.¹⁷ To what extent the Romanian delegation's trip to Peking had to do with the unity of the international workers' movement was another issue.

'We don't tell either one or the other to give up their stance,' Gheorghiu-Dej maintained, expanding on the idea of reconciliation. We just say "Let's create an atmosphere for a calm and serious discussion of the divergent issues, so that controversy would cease."¹⁸ A party delegation was instructed 'not to approach the divergent problems, but to tell the Chinese leaders that one can discuss within an acceptable framework, without invectives, without qualifications that one does not know later how to remove,' went to Peking in March 1964.¹⁹ 'This was the mission of our delegation: the end of public polemic', Gheorghiu-Dej asserted.²⁰ Party documentation, however, is contradicted by later accounts. Asked about his mediation in the Sino-Soviet conflict thirty years after the visit, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, by then Prime Minister, replied, 'I did not mediate any conflict. Who said that?' The purpose of his visit was to make the Chinese aware of the Romanian policy of getting out of the Soviet hegemony. And even more than that, 'to obtain Chinese support.'²¹

The strategy of the Romanian leadership in getting closer to the Chinese was independence. The Chinese, without knowing that, supposed that the Romanians came to convince them about the rightful stance of the Soviets.²² The Romanians were also hesitant since Mao received them with aloofness. At the beginning of the visit, the Romanians

¹⁷ Record of the meeting between the Romanian minister in London, Alexandru Lazareanu, and John Gollan, the general secretary of the British Communist Party, 3 May 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 16/1963, ff. 12-16.

¹⁸ Record of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CC of RWP, 28 February 1964 and 30 March 1964. Mircea Chiritoiu, "Esecul romanesc al polemicii soviet-chineze," *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 6 (11), 1997, pp. 62-64.

¹⁹ Record of the Plenary meeting of the CC of the RCP, 15-22 April 1964. RNA, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, f. 4.

²⁰ Gheorghiu-Dej to Gollan, 7 April 1964. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 14/1964, f. 10.

²¹ Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri [Maurer and the Yesterday World. Testimonies about the Stalinization of Romania]*, pp. 175-6.

²² Ibid., pp. 175-6.

maintained that they 'did not want to be superficial and did not come to look for negative issues, shortcomings or mistakes, but to see new and interesting things.' The Chinese reacted to such equivocal assurances with curiosity. 'What do you want from us, Comrade Romanians? On what side are you?' The Romanians had their answer prepared: 'On the side of Marxism.'²³ 'It was easy to make them think that we were closer to their approach of Marxism than to the Soviet one,' the former Romanian Premier, Maurer, assessed. According to Maurer there was no great ideological difference between the Chinese and the Russians, but a struggle for hegemony.²⁴ His lengthy talks with Zhou Enlai, the Chinese prime-minister, allowed him to explain Romanian policy. Yet, the communiqué issued by the Chinese at the end of the talks was quite cold, 'no more than two lines,' in which it was mentioned that discussions took place in a friendly atmosphere.²⁵

Certainly, the Chinese did not trust the Romanians from the very beginning, although they seemed to have understood Romania's isolations within the Communist camp. But the Chinese too needed allies. In the aftermath of the Romanian visit to China, the American ambassador in Moscow assessed that Romania had become the most important country between Moscow and Peking: the Romanians had accumulated the 'richest experience and knowledge' in approaching China.²⁶ After an unsuccessful attempt to approach the Chinese in Warsaw, the Americans were in search of intermediaries to elaborate an updated policy concerning China.²⁷ Although Romanians were not China's envoys, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Corneliu Manescu, suggested that the

²³ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 14/1964, f. 20.

²⁴ Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri*, pp. 159 and 177.

²⁵ Record of the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party, 15-22 April 1964. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, f. 4.

²⁶ Foy Kohler, the American ambassador to Moscow talking in a circle of diplomats. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 45/1964, f. 11.

²⁷ Kennedy had the Chinese issue on his agenda. The American approach was however troubled by conflicts in Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, particularly Taiwan. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 45/1964, f. 11.

The Americans appeared to Romanians as being more concerned with China than with Europe. Paris 54.848/ 4 December 1964, RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 45/1964, f. 16.

Americans should appreciate China at fair value and grant it the status it deserved of a great power.²⁸

While involving themselves in the Sino-Soviet conflict, the Romanians were careful to maintain neutrality. Relations of the father-son type should not exist between parties, Gheorghiu-Dej contended, but mutual respect, rigorous equality and non-interference in domestic affairs.' 'Each party should establish its own line according to the country's interest.'²⁹ While proclaiming the same principles as the Chinese, the Romanians were resolute in rejecting both the Soviet or Chinese hegemony. Stalin's death and Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin's excesses had destroyed the possibility that Moscow's line would henceforward be followed without hesitation.

Good Communists as they were, the Romanians continued to pursue friendly relations with the Soviet Union³⁰ and despite opposing the establishment of supranational bodies, Romania would continue to cooperate within CMEA.³¹ Nevertheless, pursuit of good relations did not mean that differences were not aired. The Romanians' divergences from the Soviets had as source the disagreement aired within CMEA. In 1961, a proposal, called the 'Valev's proposal' for a lower Danubian economic complex outraged the Romanians. In his speech of 17 January 1961 to the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Khrushchev spoke about irrigation, mentioning the work recently completed for the Volga and Nipru deltas. He also mentioned the Danube Delta where the work had to be done in agreement with the Romanians for the advantage of both the Russians and the Romanians.³² In 1948 Stalin had broached the issue

²⁸ This and nothing more is what the documents reveal about the Romanian 'strategy' concerning China. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 45/1964, f. 12.

²⁹ Memorandum of conversation between Gheorghiu-Dej and Siu Gien Guo, the ambassador of Peoples republic of China, 12 December 1963, Mircea Chiritoiu, "Esecul romanesc al polemicii soviet-chineze," *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 6 (11), 1997, pp. 60-61.

³⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, 103138/14 A. Murray to FO, June 7, 1964.

³¹ The Romanian minister in London to the general secretary of the British Communist Party, John Gollan. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 16/1963, f. 14.

³² RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 5/1961, f.1.

with a Romanian delegation then in Moscow. He was particularly interested in an old British project for a canal linking the Danube to the Black Sea. Declaring that the Soviet Union would provide Romanians with the equipment for digging the canal, Stalin rejected any argument that Gheorghiu-Dej attempted to bring up to oppose the project. Romanian media presented the project without mentioning whose idea it was.³³ The Canal was also an area of contention. Not only did it absorbed a great part of Romania's revenues, it was also a place where many political detainees lost their lives while working in inhumane conditions.

Proposals for greater economic integration and for the institutional articulation of CMEA were also troubling Romania's leaders. Moreover, they were upset for being criticized for their determination to industrialize the country. Instead receiving encouragement, they had to face unfair comments such as that they would create trucks for museums. 'What then are we allowed to produce?' Gheorghiu-Dej asked rhetorically.³⁴ The answer was obvious: everything except industrial products since the Soviets had designated for Romania the role of supplier of raw materials and agricultural products for the industrialized CMEA economies.³⁵

The idea of common enterprises and branch unions was presented as following from the perception that the socialist camp lagged behind the Common Market which had obtained impressive achievements. A 1962 Polish proposal to establish a single economic market in the Eastern Bloc was welcomed by the Soviet leadership and every other member of the Eastern Bloc except Romania. The Soviet Union was once again at

³³ According to Gheorghiu-Dej's chief of cabinet, Paul Sfetcu, if the canal had been finished during Stalin's life, he probably would have incorporated the mouth of the Danube, Delta inclusive. Paul Sfetcu, *13 ani in anticamera lui Dej*, Editura Fundatiei Culturale Romane, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 269-272.

³⁴ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 13/1963, ff. 7-8.

³⁵ The conflict between Moscow and Bucharest stemmed from the Soviets' insistence that Romania should base its economic development on oil and agricultural production. The Romanians, proud of their remarkable industrial expansion since the war, rejected this position. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, R 103138/11, Mason, Washington to Thompson.

loggerheads with Romania.³⁶ ‘Do the Romanians still agree with the principle of international division of labour adopted by the First Secretaries of the CMEA member countries in June 1962’, Andropov wondered? “We do not just agree, but made active contribution to their improvement, Gheorghiu-Dej replied.” He reminded Andropov that although the Romanians opposed the creation of a Common Market, they were fully supportive of cooperation and joint endeavours when these were consistent with the interests of the parties involved.³⁷ Such cooperation, however, could never be universal and mandatory.³⁸ Both ideas failed due to Romanian obstruction.

Seeking to override obstruction, Khrushchev argued from the rostrum of the plenary of Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party for the creation of an overall planning body for the CMEA, similar to the institutions being established in the Common Market.³⁹ Although rejected by the CMEA in June, Khrushchev revisited the proposal in the autumn of 1962, when he thought events had ‘ripened’ such that CMEA members might now be ready for a higher level of economic and political co-operation.⁴⁰ The Romanians were outraged. While they admitted that ‘the forces of production increase very fast in a socialist society,’ they confessed that they found it hard to believe that in just

³⁶ Memorandum of conversation between Gheorghiu-Dej and Siu Gien Guo, the ambassador of Peoples republic of China, 12 December 1963, Mircea Chiritoiu, “Esecul romanesc al polemicii soviet-chineze,” *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 6 (11), 1997, pp. 60-61.

Record of the meeting between Corneliu Manescu and the Chinese ambassador, Bucharest, 16 May 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 53/1963, ff 8-12.

³⁷ The mention “between interested countries” was the Romanian contribution, emphasized Dej. Note on the talks with Andropov, 2 April 1963. ff. 2-5, Dossier 13/1963, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, RNA.

³⁸ Note on the talks with Andropov, 2 April 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 13/1963, ff. 2-9.

³⁹ Record of the meeting between Corneliu Manescu and the Chinese ambassador, Bucharest, 16 May 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 53/1963, ff. 8-12.

⁴⁰ “At this level, a special significance is acquired by coordinated national-economic plans, the socialist international division of labour and by the coordination and specialization of production which will guarantee the successful organic development of the socialist countries.”

Khrushchev’s article “Vital Questions of the Development of the Socialist World System,” published in *The Communist*, the party’s most authoritative political journal, translated in English and reproduced in *Problems of peace and Socialism*, the journal of the international communist movement, vol. 5, no. 9 cited by Steele, p. 123.

few months – from June to September -- systemic growth had necessitated a new, multi-national co-ordination plan.⁴¹

In 1963, the Romanians further vetoed the creation of a Council of Ministers, a centralised structure within the CMEA, invoking the infringement of the principle of sovereignty. Under the proposed system common policies for all member nations were to be adopted following a two-thirds majority in the Council of Ministers, rather than by unanimous decision as provided by the existing arrangement. In addition to the council, a directorate was to have been created with the task of coordinating and regulating investments, prices and economic processes. ‘One can put the question, what would the Romanian party, the government and comrade Maurer do in this case?’ Gheorghiu-Dej asked. He added maliciously that the Romanian Premier would have nothing else to do than hunting – Maurer’s hobby was hunting - if the proposal were accepted.⁴²

Once again the Romanians were alone in their obstruction. Elsewhere, “[a]n artillery fire of various calibres started’ as all the Eastern leaders rushed to support Khrushchev and ‘an avalanche of articles were written by economists, lawyers and journalists’ supportive of greater integration and centralized planning. ‘Please, believe us, this was not a conspiracy,’ claimed Andropov. The support had not been orchestrated. The Romanian leadership remained unconvinced. ‘Why else had the Eastern leaders tried to include in the CMEA statute that once a new process had been adopted, all issues would become mandatory for all member states?’ If the Soviets would continue to insist on the idea of economic coordination, ‘there would be a brawl,’ Gheorghiu-Dej warned. This statement made Andropov declare that a meeting between the two leaders Gheorghiu-Dej and Khrushchev should not be delayed. With that parting shot, Andropov departed from

⁴¹ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, f. 197.

⁴² RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 13/1963, f. 5.

Bucharest directly to Pitunda, where Khrushchev was on vacation, to consult with him concerning the impasse.⁴³

Rumours about Khrushchev's secret hunting trip to Romania in October 1963 reached British diplomats.⁴⁴ It was probably Khrushchev who 'dictated' that his visit was to be unofficial and secret. The Soviet leader might have hoped to persuade the Romanians 'either to adopt a more forthright attitude in support of the Soviet line in the Sino-Soviet conflict or to take a less intransigent line in CMEA or perhaps both. If those were his motives, he did not succeed,' Khrushchev would not have wished the world to know that 'Big Brother had been paying court to Romania.' He seemingly insisted and obtained Gheorghiu-Dej's agreement for keeping the visit secret. The secrecy lasted as long as Khrushchev.

During a long talk in Bucharest with Gordon Walker, Maurer confirmed that there had indeed been a meeting between Gheorghiu-Dej and Khrushchev. The Romanians refused to yield to the renewed Russian pressure for a supra-national planning organisation in which the decisions were to be taken by majority and not by unanimity. Khrushchev accepted the Romanian position but asked them to maintain silence over the subject. The Russian economic publications and the debates in the other CMEA countries favoured

⁴³ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 13/1963, ff. 5 and 10-17.

⁴⁴ The information was conveyed to the American Ambassador in Bucharest by a reporter for *Life* magazine who did a picture story about hunting lodges in Transylvania. He was shown the record of bears shot by Khrushchev and Gheorghiu-Dej between 3 and 10 October 1963. The Yugoslav diplomats heard that 'Party and international affairs had been discussed' during Khrushchev's secret hunting trip. The British Embassy in Moscow found that, at the end of September, Khrushchev was in the Kuban region, in the South-East Ukraine, and it would have been easy to slip into Romania unobserved.

TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/1, J. D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to H.F. T. Smith, FO, 16 January 1964 and T.R.M. Sewell, British Embassy Moscow to H.F.T. Smith, FO, 15 February 1964.

Gheorghiu-Dej did not go to the airport for Khrushchev's arrival, but accompanied the Soviet leader for his departure, on 7 October. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 101/1963, ff. 1-3.

however the surrender of national sovereignty for economic planning, determining the Romanians to state publicly their position.⁴⁵

Later, Gheorghiu-Dej discussed Romania's own problems with Moscow's domineering ways with more sympathetic Chinese leaders. 'We had also problems,' Gheorghiu-Dej had told the Chinese ambassador in Bucharest, 'but we stood firmly against any forms which infringe sovereignty, independence, equality and draw upon interference in domestic affairs.'⁴⁶ You already know about the economic cooperation; we stood against this decision and they had to withdraw it. Although I cannot say that we persuaded them. We were alone: all the others acted in coordination and began to exert big pressures. We considered every our step and acted only when the matter was clearly established and we had identified our adversaries' weak points. The Soviets, in response, repeatedly accused the Romanian leadership of 'narrowness and nationalism'.⁴⁷

The following year, the Soviets announced that a delegation led by N. Podgorny, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, would visit Romania. They were expected to arrive in July 1964. Anticipating that Podgorny would renew the attack, the Romanian leadership decided in advance not to compromise since the 'the smallest compromise could entail further concessions.' Podgorny would be told flat out that Romanians did not share the Soviet view on the value of greater integration.⁴⁸ The Podgorny visit took place soon after Maurer's return from the Soviet Union, and once again

⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/14, J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 6 June 1964.

⁴⁶ 'After receiving my letter,' Gheorghiu-Dej mentioned, 'Khrushchev had begun to make excuses, assessing that I did not understand him, that he did not even think about infringement of sovereignty . . . perhaps he did not express himself properly; he was not, however, the only one who came with the issue of common enterprises.' Memorandum of conversation. Gheorghiu-Dej and Siu Gien Guo, the ambassador of Peoples republic of China, 12 December 1963, Mircea Chiritoiu, "Esecul romanesc al polemicii soviet-chineze," *Dosarele Istoriei*, no. 6 (11), 1997, p. 62.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

⁴⁸ The Romanian leadership constantly referred to the 1957 and 1960 declarations on sovereignty and equality of communist parties. The meeting of the Political Bureau of 13 May 1963, RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 20/1963, ff. 13-14.

whatever the intention might have been, the only agreement that could be reached was that the divergence should not be made public.⁴⁹ Even on this issue, 'success' was modest.

The purpose of Podgorny's visit was to dissuade the Romanians from circulating a memorandum detailing their differences with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It was not clear whether the proposed statement was to deal primarily with CMEA affairs or with the Sino-Soviet dispute. According to the Americans the Poles had seen a draft and the Russians, 'getting wind of what was brewing, despatched Podgorny to nip it in the bud.'⁵⁰ By the time of his intervention, the Romanians had already circulated their statement inside the Communist Party with copies on the way to other fraternal, national parties.⁵¹

While in May 1963 the outcome of Romania's defiant stand against the Soviet economic dictation through the CMEA was uncertain, by July 1964 it was evident that Romania had won the battle.⁵² In the longer term the loosening of the economic bond between Romania and the Soviet Union 'should be of political as well as economic importance for the further diversification of Eastern European relations,' the Foreign Office asserted. 'It confirms our view of the way which Eastern Europe is going and will continue to go.'⁵³

⁴⁹ On July 27 Podgorny paid a visit to a Black Sea resort, Eforie, to meet Gheorghiu-Dej, Apostol, Bodnarus, and Ceausescu. The Soviet Ambassador, Ghegalin also participated in the meeting. An announcement appeared in *Scanteia*. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/24; /24 A. Murray to FO, 29 July 1964; FO 371/177622, NR 103138/24C. McGhie, British Embassy, Bucharest, to Charles Thompson, FO, August 6, 1964. Pravda of 29 July reported on Podgorny's visit to Romania. FO 371/177622, R 103138/24 B, H. Trevelyan, British Embassy, Moscow, to FO, 29 July 1964.

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/27, B.G. Cartledge, British Embassy, Moscow to E. Youde, FO, 13 August 1964.

⁵¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/24 C, J.I. McGhie, Bucharest, to C.A. Thompson, Foreign Office, August 6, 1964.

⁵² BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, British Embassy Bucharest, to Michael Stewart, Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 4 March 1965, Despatch no. 15 S.

⁵³ TNA, PRO, FO 177622, NR 103138/13, H.F.T. Smith to Wilson, June 16, 1964. FO Minute on Romanian relations with the Soviet Union.

While the Chinese had been kept informed concerning the evolution of the disagreement,⁵⁴ a diplomatic offensive towards the West had also started. The Romanians were persuasive. A West German trade mission was sent to Bucharest in October 1963. The same year, the British Legation in Bucharest was upgraded to the level of embassy.⁵⁵ The issue of raising the level of diplomatic missions and lifting travel restrictions for diplomats was also broached by the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs during visits to the US and France. Although at first the French Foreign Minister, Couve de Murville, replied hesitantly, when Manescu clearly asserted Romania's determination to develop its relations with all countries, France included, de Murville intervened, '*mainly* with France, this is our desire.'⁵⁶ Agreeing to the development of commercial relations, the French insisted as well on cultural exchanges.⁵⁷ Of particular interest was French language taught in schools and a wider distribution for French books in Romania. Better relations of this nature were not just desirable, but possible, the French Foreign Minister pointed out, referring to the affinities of languages and the long cultural connection between the two countries. Adamant for the dissemination of French literature in Romania -- 'books not translated in Romanian' -- the French were careful to stress that 'the content of these books would not embarrass the Romanian government.' Both parties agreed, ultimately, to work

⁵⁴ The Chinese charge d' Affairs in London mentioned in a talk with Lazareanu, the Romanian Ambassador, in August 1964 that he read in the press that Romanians would not participate in December in a preparatory meeting proposed by the Soviets. Although there was an improvement in diplomatic Anglo-Chinese relations, he believed that the British were duplicitous. De Gaulle was on the other hand more realistic and sincere. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 45/1964, ff. 37-38.

⁵⁵ Gaston Marin went to London and was received by Butler, the British Foreign Minister. Politburo's meeting, 5 December 1963, RNA, CC of RCP, Chancery, Dossier 58/1963, f. 6.

⁵⁶ Murville agreed that normal diplomatic relations between the two countries implied the restoration of the diplomatic missions to the level of embassies. Though, the level of representation was a sensitive issue, involving not just bilateral relations but France's relation with the other Eastern European states as well. Record of the meeting between Manescu and Couve de Murville, Paris, 4 November 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 91/1963, f. 11.

⁵⁷ The Romanian economy had undergone structural changes; besides oil and wood, there was a full range of products that might interest the French buyers, Manescu underlined. The French confirmed their interest in developing commercial relations with Romania at least until 1970 when the Common Market would undergo structural changes. Manescu replied that international trade should develop freely without obstacles of any kind. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 91/1963, ff. 7-10.

to foster improved cultural relations and to encourage cultural exchanges; the *Comédie Française* was booked to tour Romania in 1964.⁵⁸

Britain was also in the game of stepping up contact with the Romanians, reversing its previously tentative approach. Receiving James Dalton Murray in his new capacity as Ambassador, on February 18, 1964, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out the continued development of economic and cultural relations between the two countries.⁵⁹ In 1964 the British Council organized an Exhibition of Contemporary British Painting in Bucharest and Iasi and the Royal Shakespeare Company played “King Lear” and the “Comedy of Errors” before a Romanian audience in Bucharest.⁶⁰

By 1964, English had already replaced French as the most important foreign language at the principal universities, with an increase in the number of first-year students in the English Faculty at the University of Bucharest to 257. Another forty-three students were studying it as a subsidiary subject. Previously less than twenty-five students were studying English.⁶¹ Asked what foreign language they wanted to study, twenty-seven students at a secondary school in Bucharest chose English and three French. ‘A single boy, regarded as quite foolish, chose Russian.’⁶²

Russian ceased to be a compulsory language in Romanian secondary schools from the educational year 1963-4. A redirection of educational policy away from Russification was evident. Russian language instruction had been compulsory since the war. Now, the study of Russian became optional in elementary and secondary schools and pupils were

⁵⁸ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 91/1963, ff.17-20.

⁵⁹ RDA, Dossier 20/E, England, ff. 57-60.

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, CF/RU/680/1, J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest, to Michael Stewart, 4 March 1965, Despatch no. 15 S.

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, R 103138/9, E.L.B. Hunter, British Embassy Bucharest, to FO, 23 April 1964.

⁶² Julian Halle, *Ceausescu's Romania. A political documentary*, London, 1971, p. 53.

offered opportunity to choose the foreign language they wanted to study.⁶³ Just as fifteen years before it had been difficult to find teachers able to teach Russian, so now teacher shortages of new languages were apparent.⁶⁴ Teachers of English were in particularly short supply. While four thousand teachers had been trained to teach Russian, there were only eighty capable of providing English instruction. French was in a better position. The Ministry of Education had at its disposal eight hundred teachers able to teach French, so at least initially French became the Western language of default for many students.⁶⁵ English caught up quickly. In an attempt to satiate public demand for Western language instruction, English lessons were extensively broadcast on the radio while programs such as 'Learn Russian singing' or songs like 'I love you, Moscow' vanished from Romanian air waves.⁶⁶ The 'twist' and the latest pop records from France, the United States and Britain could be heard over the radio and at the Bucharest night clubs.⁶⁷

The new cultural redirection taken by the Romanians was evident. One by one the institutions stressing the connection with Russia were shutdown, replaced, or merged into other institutions with broader mandates. The 'Russian Bookstore' located in Bucharest vanished overnight and was replaced by the 'Universal Bookstore.' The Romanian edition of the Soviet review of international affairs, *Timpuri Noi* [*New Times*] ceased its appearance and a Romanian weekly political magazine, *Lumea* [*The World*] appeared instead.⁶⁸ The Museum of Romanian-Soviet Brotherhood and the Institute for Literature,

⁶³ 'In the sixth grade, we were asked what language we would like to study. Most of us has chosen French.' Dan Ciachir, "Derusificarea si dezghetul" [De-Russification and the Thaw], *Ziua*, no. 3628, 20 May 2006.

⁶⁴ Crash courses were designed for teachers to learn the Cyrillic characters. Julian Hale, *Ceausescu's Romania. A political Documentary*, London, 1971, p. 37.

⁶⁵ Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party, 30 August 1963, RNA, Chancery, Dossier 44/1963, f. 44.

⁶⁶ Dan Ciachir, "Derusificarea si dezghetul" [The De-Russification and the Thaw], *Ziua*, no. 3628, 20 May 2006.

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, BW 53/17, J.D. Murray, British Embassy Bucharest to Michael Stewart, Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 4 March 1965.

⁶⁸ The last edition of the *New Times* appeared in October 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 44/1963, f. 75; TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/1: J.D. Murray to H.F. T. Smith, 16

‘Maxim Gorki’ simply vanished.’⁶⁹ The Institute for Russian Studies in Bucharest was absorbed by the new Institute for Foreign Languages. There were also rumours that the Soviet-Romanian Friendship Society (ARLUS) ‘is to be disbanded’ or ‘allowed to fade quietly away’.⁷⁰ Cautious to make sure that the decision concerning ARLUS proposed by Gheorghiu-Dej would not be ‘misinterpreted,’ the party claimed that the ‘reorganization’ of ARLUS was determined by the need to reduce expenses. All these institutions established in the late 1940s had pursued a veritable campaign of Russification.⁷¹

What did the Soviet leadership think of the changes occurring in Romania? Murray was frustrated that his French and American counterparts in Bucharest got ‘a running stream of comments from Moscow which assists them considerably in forming their views about Romanian policies and actions’. In contrast, he received ‘virtually nothing’ from ‘the generously staffed Moscow Embassy’ on ‘the sort of development about which we might reasonably expect some comments’.⁷² Although the developments in Romania ‘may not make much difference to the way the people in the Kremlin behave or what they think,’ Murray was convinced that the adjustment of Romanian policy would eventually lead to an alteration of its relationship with the Soviet Union. Even though

January 1964, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/5, J.D. Murray to H.F.T. Smith passed on to Thomas Brimelow, 27 February 1964.

⁶⁹ ‘The Communist regime had decided on the unification of the Institute ‘Maxim Gorki’ with the Department for foreign languages of the University of Bucharest, practically closing down the institute. Note of the Department of Education and Health of the Central Committee of the RMP, 29 August 1963. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 44/1963, f. 6.

⁷⁰ The abbreviation ARLUS stood for Association for Close Ties with the Soviet Union (in Romanian: *Asociația Română pentru Legături Strânse cu Uniunea Sovietică*).

McGhie noted that the press had given little if any publicity to the activities of the society since the end of the year. A reading room which had hitherto dealt exclusively with the Soviet material had been renamed ‘Reading Room for Romanian and Soviet publications.’

‘A reduction in the status of ARLUS would be a logical step following the other measures of de-Russification in 1963,’ McGhie assessed at the end of his report. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/2, J.I. McGhie, British Embassy Bucharest, to C. A. Thompson, 23 January 1964.

⁷¹ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 58/1963, ff. 18-19.

⁷² Murray’s despatch to the Moscow Embassy referred to the fact that although he realised that what the French and American Missions in Moscow passed on to their Missions in Bucharest about Soviet reactions ‘may be little more than gossip and guesswork but perhaps there is an occasional nugget of solid information.’ He continued: ‘all we would like, on the same basis, is your gossip and guesswork together with such firmer indications as you may have about the Russian attitudes of mind towards major Romanian developments, when you think there is anything worth sending. And it may sometimes help us to hear that the Russians have not reacted – even maintaining a poker face can indicate emotion of some sort.’

Romania was a minor concern for British foreign policy, and this seemed unlikely to change much, the British Embassy in Moscow should not look at Romania from ‘the wrong end of their telescope.’ Murray was convinced that Romania would make remarkable progress towards greater independence.⁷³

We shall see further evidence of Romanian independent mindedness this year and it will be interesting to hear how the Russians react or if they do not react to hear what the Embassy think about their failure to do so.⁷⁴

In his report to the Foreign office, the British Ambassador in Moscow, T. Brimelow, found not a word in the Russian press about de-Russification process that took place in Romania. This did not mean that the Soviets had not noticed, or approved the change in direction. The Soviets, in fact, were very proud both of the Russian tradition and the Soviet contribution.⁷⁵ They were, in fact, highly offended, as they made clear during a meeting with a Romanian delegation to Moscow in 1964.

In March 1964, a delegation led by the Prime Minister Maurer passed through the Soviet Union on the way back from a visit to Peking. London, becoming aware of the gravity of the Sino-Soviet split, wondered if the Soviets had been consulted about the delegation’s visit to China. ‘They had been informed’, the Romanians indicated, but had not been asked for permission.⁷⁶ On their way back from Peking, the Romanians went to Gagra to meet Khrushchev, Mikoyan and Andropov. *Izvestiya* published a brief announcement: the two parties exchanged opinions on questions of mutual interest. ‘In the course of discussions particular attention was given to questions connected with the

⁷³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/3, J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to Howard Smith, 15 January 1964.

⁷⁴ Murray urged the new head of the Northern Department, Howard Smith, to visit Bucharest, assuring that the visit ‘would be both interesting and worthwhile.’ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/3, J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to Howard Smith, 15 January 1964.

⁷⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622. NR 103138/3 (A), Thomas Brimelow, British Embassy in Moscow to H.F.T Smith, Foreign Office, 10 February 1964.

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/6 – H. Trevelyan, British Embassy, Moscow, to H.F.T. Smith, Foreign Office, 5 March 1964.

struggle for the strengthening of the unity and solidarity of the Socialist countries.’⁷⁷ It was in fact a quarrel during which Andropov, responsible for relations with other socialist countries, reproached the Romanians their ‘adversarial stance’ as proved by the closure of the bookstore ‘The Russian Book’ and of the Institute ‘Maxim Gorki.’⁷⁸

In opposing the economic integration within the CMEA, the hitherto unpopular and feared Romania’s leaders looked for support to nationalist and anti-Russian feeling. The Romanian Communist Party publicized a resolution pointing out the right to develop a national policy in light of Romania’s interests. The document formally entitled ‘The Declaration on the Stance of the Romanian Workers Party Concerning Questions related to the Communist and Workers movement’ (known as Romania’s ‘Declaration of Independence’) marked Romania’s foreign policy. The ‘declaration’ was read in the plenary of the Central Committee held between 15 and 22 April 1964.⁷⁹ It provided that the principles of independence of national sovereignty, equality, mutual advantage, non-interference in domestic affair and respect for territorial integrity should provide the basis for relations between Communist and Workers Parties. It stated that ‘as long as there are national and state distinctions among peoples and countries – and such distinctions will continue for a very long time even after the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship on a world scale – the unity of the communist movement does not require the elimination of diversities or the abolition of national distinctions.’ It asserted Romania’s ideological

⁷⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/7 – H. Trevelyan, British Embassy, Moscow, to Foreign Office, 17 March 1964.

⁷⁸ Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri [Maurer and the Yesterday World. Testimonies about the stalinization of Romania]*, Editura Dacia, 2001. pp. 182-3.

⁷⁹ During the Politburo’s meeting on 2 April 1964, it was decided that a committee composed of Maurer, Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnaras, Nicolae Ceausescu, Chivu Stoica and Leonte Rautu, should draft a party declaration concerning the Sino-Soviet polemic.

sovereignty, claiming that ‘nobody can decide what is and what is not correct for other parties.’⁸⁰ ‘We had long talks about it,’ Maurer, by then Prime Minister, recalled.

All communist parties are equal, we stated, no matter how big or small is the country. . . Such things, after being heard so many times, seem without importance, but during Dej times, when we made them public they meant something! It took a great courage to tell the Soviets that you consider yourself their equal!’⁸¹

After being adopted by the Central Committee, the statement was broadcast to the population.⁸² Although they needed the support of the people, economic issues were too pressing to allow the leadership to be content with simple popularity. At party meetings, participants were told the truth about the unjust relations between Romania and the Soviet Union and the destructive role played by Sovroms for the Romanian economy.⁸³

The long dissimulation game played during the period of unfair trade with the Soviet Union was now recalled. No less than sixteen Sovroms were set up in the aftermath of the Second World War in oil industry, coal, tractor-building, banking, chemistry, transportation, navy, film production and other industrial enterprises.⁸⁴ Practically ‘everything except the Patriarchate [the highest Orthodox institution] was Sovrom!’ Gheorghiu-Dej admitted that when he took power he did not care much about Romanian enterprises, ‘I told myself: *The Devil take them! Why should I trouble my head about*

⁸⁰ Jonathan Steele, *Eastern Europe since Stalin*, Crane, Russak & Company, 1974, pp. 125-127.

⁸¹ Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri [Maurer and the Yesterday World. Testimonies about the stalinization of Romania]*, pp. 181-182.

⁸² Elis Neagoe-Plesa, “Gheorghiu-Dej si politica externa a Romaniei (1945-1965),” *Arhivele Securitatii*, no. 4, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedica, 2008, pp. 534-535.

⁸³ Analysing in 1949 the Soviet intentions towards Romania by the establishment of joint Sovrom companies, the British representatives believed that in the short term the Soviets intended to exploit the Romanian economy while in the long-term policy, they had in perspective to obtain political control over Romania. TNA, PRO, FO 371/78613, R 9045/11338/37, Roberts, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 13 September 1949.

⁸⁴ The Soviets had allegedly contributed to the Sovroms with equipment. Their ‘contribution’ to the Sovrom Transport was few ships previously seized from Romania. Sovrom Transport controlled Romanian harbours, port installations, shipyards, and the entire Danube River and Black Sea fleets. Sovrom Wood took over the state-owned Romanian forests, about 30 per cent of all timber in Romania, the Russians claiming they had contributing with some machinery. TARS controlled all civil aviation; Sovrom Bank controlled all banking activities. Wolff, *The Balkans in our Time*, New York: Norton, 1967, pp. 344-346.

them?’ Iatrov, one of the Soviet representatives in Romania, ‘looked on the country as if he was its governor. If he saw a company he liked, he used to say, “You cannot manage it, but we can. This must become Sovrom!” He demanded in fact that all profitable enterprises become Sovroms.’⁸⁵ Although initially disinterested in the management of the economy, Gheorghiu-Dej had in fact raised the issue of *Sovroms* during a meeting with Stalin. He claimed to have been outspoken about the question. What Stalin replied him remains however a mystery. Gheorghiu-Dej confessed though that he was asked questions as he was ‘under investigation’, as the Soviet representatives Iatrov and Merkurov tried to intimidate him.⁸⁶

Gheorghiu-Dej ‘could not adopt a policy [of independence] from the beginning,’ Alexandru Barladeanu, Romania’s representative to CMEA, later asserted. He ‘understood very well the Soviet reality, and did not want to copy it. He had been waiting for a propitious time to start on this path.’⁸⁷ Maurer concurred with this assessment. Gheorghiu-Dej could do nothing at the beginning but carry out Soviet dictates.⁸⁸ Most of the changes introduced in political and economic life were copies of the Stalinist models, for example the collectivization of agriculture. The fact that serious accusations against Gheorghiu-Dej were aired in June 1947 seems to confirm Maurer’s assessment. Gheorghiu-Dej’s discontent with the establishment of *Sovroms* and the Red Army’s presence brought against him the accusation of anti-Sovietism.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Record of conversation between Gheorghiu-Dej and John Gollan, 7 April 1964. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 14/1964, f. 69.

⁸⁶ Ibid., ff. 69-71.

⁸⁷ Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Barladeanu despre Dej, Ceausescu si Iliescu, [Alexandru Barladeanu about Dej, Ceausescu and Iliescu]*, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁸ In 1968, when certain old communists were rehabilitated (mostly posthumously), doubts were cast on the integrity of Gheorghiu-Dej. ‘Though Party members understood privately that his sins were committed at the behest of the Russians’. FCO 28/41, John Chadwick’s despatch “A Picture of Rumania” (annex B) in view of the Secretary of State’s visit to Romania, 8-11 September 1968.

⁸⁹ The report written by Bodnarus was conveyed to M.A. Suslov by general Susaikov. The latter suggested that Maurer should be offered a diplomatic job, possibly in order to get him out of the country.

Previously acquiesced in as a 'powerful factor' in the development of Romanian economy,⁹⁰ the Sovroms were now expounded as means of damaging it. Although officially the Sovroms were abolished in 1954, certain of them continued to drain Romania's resources even afterwards. In June 1962, during his visit to Romania, Khrushchev admitted that creation of Sovroms was 'a stupid thing that Mikoyan had fed Stalin'.⁹¹ Nonetheless, Khrushchev did not agree with the closure of Sovrom Quartz which extracted and delivered uranium to the Soviet Union.⁹²

The nationalist campaign which followed the Declaration of Independence staggered the public by its unprecedented intensity.⁹³ A nationwide series of meetings was held to expound the new independent policy laid down in the Declaration of April 22.⁹⁴ The Party leadership was praised for using 'scientific arguments' in expressing their disagreements with the Soviets. That was why, the leadership concluded, the 'party's prestige has grown and will grow.'⁹⁵ The meetings were not confined to party members but aimed at the whole population. Sessions were held throughout the country, in institutions and enterprises, schools and universities, and people were encouraged to express their enthusiasm.⁹⁶ Speeches took a more strongly anti-Soviet tone than the declaration itself.⁹⁷

Within the Romanian Communist party there were two main groups: the pro-Soviet 'Moscow Group'; and, the 'national communists' mainly concerned with furthering Romania's own interests. Pauker to V.I. Lesakov, , cited by Ioan Chiper, Florin Constantiniu, "Modelul Stalinist de sovietizare a Romaniei, II", *Arhivele totalitarismului*, 3/1995, Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, p. 37.

⁹⁰ FO 371/78613, R 11145/11338/37, Chancery, Bucharest, to FO, 22 November 1949; Encloses translation of a leading article which appeared in *Scanteia* 4 November 1949, "Sovroms, a Powerful Factor in the Development of our National Economy."

⁹¹ Note on the private talks between Khrushchev and the Romanian leaders, June 1962. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 39/1962, vol. 2, f. 30.

⁹² Bodnaras, vice-president of the Council of Ministers between 1955 and 1957 was assigned to approach Khrushchev on the sensitive issue concerning the Sovrom Quartz. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 16/1964, f. 20. Record of the plenary meeting of the CC of the Romanian Workers Party, 15-22 April 1964.

In 1955 while he was Minister of Defence, Bodnaras approached Khrushchev on the issue of withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Romania which took place three years later.

⁹³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/12/G, Foreign Office to Washington, 4 June 1964.

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/13, Murray to Butler, 4 June 1964, Anti-Soviet currents and future policy.

⁹⁵ RNA, CC of RCP, Chancery, Dossier 22/1964, f. 61.

⁹⁶ Maurer's statement in Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri [Maurer and the Yesterday World. Testimonies about Stalinization of Romania]*, pp. 181-182.

For the first time Khrushchev was roundly attacked for attempting to interfere in Romanian affairs and for having shown scant respect for Romanian interests, causing a stir among the population.⁹⁸ An informant of the British Minister in Bucharest described the astonished audience as being like a man sitting in the dentist's chair, rigidly with his mouth open.⁹⁹ The general theme of the meetings appeared to have been opposition to Soviet economic exploitation of the country, as exemplified by the facts that Romania paid three times as much as it should have in reparations; it sent food to the Soviet Union although short itself; and its uranium deposits were exploited solely for Soviet benefit.¹⁰⁰ The dispute within CMEA was also detailed.

Critical party cadres received fuller information still. In addition to the April Declaration, the transcripts of the talks between the Romanian delegation and the Chinese, Koreans and Soviets delegations concerning the Sino-Soviet polemic, along with a number of letters exchanged between the Central Committee of CPSU and the Romanian Party and certain issues raised in CMEA were tabled. For fifteen hours, on the 19 and 20 of May 1964, all of these things were read. The audience was advised not to take notes but listen to the materials presented.¹⁰¹ We might imagine that the material presented constituted several bombshells.

Gheorghiu-Dej was emerging as the most serious challenge to Moscow's domination of Eastern Europe since Marshal Tito's revolt. Hardly surprisingly there were reports that Khrushchev had tried to oust the Romanian leader. When the attempt failed, what had become a nasty squabble quickly went public. According to the *Daily Mail*,

⁹⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/14 – J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 6 June 1964.

⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/12/G, Foreign Office to Washington, 4 June 1964.

⁹⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/15, J.D. Murray to Smith, 21 May 1964 – Government briefing meetings held in Bucharest.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 177622, NR 103138/13. FO Minute, H.F.T. Smith to Wilson, 16 June 1964.

¹⁰¹ Transcript of the meeting with cadres from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce at the debate of the documents of the Plenary of the CC of RWP, 19-20 May 1964. RNA CC of RCP, Chancellery, Dossier 24/1964, ff. 3-4.

Khrushchev is said to be increasingly disturbed by Romania's show of independence, and to have been angered particularly by Gheorghiu-Dej decision to send a top-level delegation to Washington to seek closer ties with the United States. Experts on Communist affairs here are convinced that Romania is now well on the road to becoming as independent as Marshal Tito's Yugoslavia.... Charges of a Soviet conspiracy to overthrow the party leader are being made at meetings organised by the Communist party throughout Romania... Party spokesmen asserted the Russians had tried to enlist another prominent Communist leader, the Defence Minister, Emil Bodnaras, to lead a revolt against Gheorghiu-Dej. Instead, Bodnaras had appraised Gheorghiu-Dej of the Kremlin plot.¹⁰²

While Romanian foreign policy was in the midst of a remarkable change, there were no signs of liberalization of the regime's internal policies, even though large numbers of political prisoners had been released from prisons, labour camps, and house arrest and internal exile had been allowed to return home or otherwise freed.¹⁰³ Asked about Romania's internal and foreign policies in those years, Maurer answered like an astute politician, 'It is difficult to determine what is the optimal ratio between the internal and foreign policy of a country since foreign policy is determined by the politics pursued by the neighbouring countries, world politics and, of course, by what happens in the country. A state must start in its foreign policy from the premise that its interests are met. The focus on specific interests may change from time to time.'¹⁰⁴

In May 1964, seeking to capitalize on their newly recovered autonomy, Romania despatched a high-level delegation to the United States. The visit was well-publicised in the press.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, only a short press notice indicated the visit to Moscow of a delegation led by Chivu Stoica. Soviet concern at recent developments was almost certainly behind Stoica's visit whose purpose was declared as being economic, with

¹⁰² "Romanians accuse Khrushchev of plotting a purge," *Daily Mail*, 1 June 1964, TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, R 103138/11.

¹⁰³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/12/G, Foreign Office to Washington, 4 June 1964.

¹⁰⁴ Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri [Maurer and the Yesterday World. Testimonies about Sstalinization of Romania]*, pp. 181-204.

¹⁰⁵ According to the American Ambassador in Bucharest, William Crawford, in response to the Romanian insubordination, the Russians were about to withdraw their offer to facilitate the development of the Galati Steel Works. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/10, R. H. Mason, British Embassy, Washington, to Charles Thomson, Foreign Office, 27 May 1964.

special reference to the petro-chemical industry. The fact that the Romanian delegation met the top-ranking Soviet leaders Brezhnev, Podgorny and Suslov led the British to infer that the talks did not actually focus on petrochemicals. 'It is not an unreasonable guess that the Russians have asked the Romanians to come to Moscow for a talk and that the current anti-Soviet campaign would be on the agenda', read a minute of Foreign Office.¹⁰⁶ To dampen speculation, it was simply announced that visits like this one were part of the constant exchanges of views between the two parties on agriculture, industry and other fields. This visit was not the first and would not be the last. Stoica's visit followed from an invitation of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.¹⁰⁷

Whatever the truth, the Romanian leadership appears to have cared far more about what was happening in Washington than in Moscow. It was most important that the visit of the delegation led by Gaston Marin appear a success. However, while giving plenty of publicity to the visit, the Romanians confess that they did not want a great deal of propaganda about moving out of the Soviet orbit. The Romanian delegation was interested in concluding a Consular convention and in the development of trade and tourism between the two countries. In *coulisses* the Romanian delegation made it clear that they were going to move further towards independence. 'They are saying that they have always aspired to political independence of the Soviet Union but that their strategy has been to wait until their economy is on firm foundation before attempting to assert it.' Washington shared this assessment. The Romanians 'had consistently gone further than they need have in asserting their independence of the Russians,' William Crawford, the

¹⁰⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/15, FO Minute, H.F.T. Smith to Lord Hood, 29 May 1964; FO 371/177622, NR 103138/12/G, Foreign Office to Washington, 4 June 1964.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, PRO, RDA, Dossier 20/A/England 1964, ff. 177-180, 5 June 1964.

American Minister in Bucharest, maintained.¹⁰⁸ The British Embassy in the United States also stated their view on the Romanians' visit to Washington:

After their refusal to accept the Soviet plan as put forward under the auspices of CMEA for the integration of Eastern European economies, the Romanians might have been expected to mark time. But this was not at all what happened: they kept raising the ante. Their expedition to Peking, their declaration of April 22, the despatch of Gaston Marin to Washington and the anti-Soviet or, if you prefer it, the Romanian nationalist agitation which is now going on in Romania are all examples of this.¹⁰⁹

The Romanian position was somewhat more tentative, and it was understood in Bucharest that something more forthright would have been preferred in the West. The Declaration of Independence might not have given full satisfaction to everyone, the Romanians admitted. Some might have desired something sensational or looked for a total change of the party line. The declaration was actually a restatement, of the political standpoint expressed in the article signed by Maurer and published in *Problems of Peace and Socialism* on 4 November 1963 and not a break with the other socialist countries.¹¹⁰ Even so, the importance of the shift could not be under-estimated and fellow renegades in both Blocs understood what had transpired.

The French were enthusiastic about the evolution of Romania's foreign policy. This development should not be surprising. French ties with Bucharest were old and integral. Moreover, under De Gaulle France was seeking to assert its own position in the West – looking, as was Romania, for some middle ground. 'For the first time in its history, Romania enters its destiny, becoming a nation in the true sense of the word,' De Gaulle stated, adding that 'the Romanian phenomenon... cannot be ignored. Romania is no longer a satellite, but an independent country.' 'The theses on independence and sovereignty are important not only for Romania but also for other countries,' De Gaulle

¹⁰⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/10, R. H. Mason, British Embassy, Washington, to Charles Thomson, Foreign Office, 27 May 1964.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ RDA, Dossier 20 England/ 1964, ff. 71-74.

contended.¹¹¹ In a speech in Strasbourg, De Gaulle mentioned the necessity of developing relations with socialist countries within the framework of 'the European idea.' Western European countries should contribute to the development of Eastern Europe without interfering in their political system, De Gaulle believed, establishing for Europe a position between the superpowers.¹¹² The French seem to have found similarities between their 'dissidence' in the West and the Romanian desire for great independence within the Eastern Bloc.

Britain's reaction to the Romanian *demarche* was less full-blooded, but then again, the United Kingdom was no renegade.¹¹³ Although full of subtleties, the Declaration of Independence 'comes to the aid of many parties outside of the communist camp that could not decide over their perspective between the two points of view, Soviet and Chinese,' J. McGhie, the British Charge d' Affairs, asserted. The Romanian leadership had expressed clearly a policy which stressed nation first, over ideological considerations.¹¹⁴ It was recognized in London, as well, that in taking this position the Romanians were also motivated by domestic considerations. 'It will be interesting to see how far the Romanians will go, the Foreign Office wondered, to secure their home base by appeal to nationalist sentiments. They must also be interested in safeguarding themselves from economic pressure by reassurance in the West.'¹¹⁵

Were the Romanian leaders foreseeing a dramatic reorientation towards the West? Had the campaign foreshadowed further estrangement from the Soviet bloc?¹¹⁶ Nothing

¹¹¹ De Gaulle's statements were transmitted by Malraux, the Minister of Cultural Affairs to V. Dimitriu, Romania's representative in Paris, November 25, 1964. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 45/1964, ff. 17 and 25-26.

¹¹² RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 197/1965, f. 61.

¹¹³ According to the Chinese charge d' Affairs in London, 'while the British were duplicitous, De Gaulle was more realistic and sincere'. Though, he predicted an improvement of Anglo-Chinese relations. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 45/1964, ff. 37-39.

¹¹⁴ The talks took place with the occasion of a cocktail offered by the Danish legation in Bucharest on 28 April 1964. Informative note signed by V. Pungan. RDA, Dossier 20 England/ 1964, ff. 71-74, MAE.

¹¹⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/9, FO Minute, D. Thomas, 4 May 1964.

¹¹⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/12/G, Foreign Office to Washington, 4 June 1964.

of the kind was in the mind of the Romanian leaders. Although the Romanian Foreign Minister emphasized ‘earnestly and emphatically’ Romania’s position as a country which stands ‘on her feet, shored up by no-one and beholden to no-one,’ he also declared that the divergences with the Soviets did not extend beyond economic issues.¹¹⁷ The Romanian leaders did not intend ‘to precipitate a break’ with the Soviet Union. If they broke with the Soviets ‘they may end up inside rather than on the nationalist tiger.’¹¹⁸

Romania was not going to redirect its policy away from the European Communist Bloc towards the West. To attempt to do so would risk reprisal from Moscow while there was no guarantee that any ‘free’ Romania would continue to follow a Communist leadership. The leadership sought freedom of action while remaining a member of the Warsaw Pact and of CMEA. The freedom of action Romania wanted was primarily economic. This was of the origin of its divergence from the Soviet Union, the Romanian Prime Minister told Gordon Walker.¹¹⁹ However, the struggle for economic freedom could take on a political complexion, the Head of the Northern Department in the Foreign Office, Howard Smith, believed. Although it was too soon to anticipate the outcome of the friction between Moscow and Bucharest, it was quite likely that the Russians and the Romanians ‘will come to an understanding by which polemics are avoided and Romania follows a fairly independent line economically.’

In the shorter term, therefore, we are unlikely to see anything very dramatic. But in the longer term this loosening of the economic bond should be of political as well as economic importance for the further diversification of Eastern European relations. It confirms our view of the way which Eastern Europe is going and will continue to go.¹²⁰

The evaluation proved to be correct.

¹¹⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/22 A, Bucharest to Foreign Office, 15 July 1964.

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/13, FO Minute, D. Thomas to C.A. Thompson, 8 June 1964.

¹¹⁹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/13, H.F.T. Smith to Wilson, 16 June 1964, FO Minute on Soviet-Romanian relations.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

In the aftermath of the Washington visit, and in an effort to re-establish relations with the Soviets on new footings, a high level delegation led by Maurer went to Moscow on July 6, 1964. It aimed to achieve a readjustment of Soviet-Romanian relations on a lasting basis.¹²¹ Maurer's party included politicians with strong ties to the Soviet leadership: Emil Bodnaras, Leonte Rautu, a former member of the Comintern, and Alexandru Barladeanu, who had spent the Second World War in the Soviet Union. The point of including these men was to demonstrate to Moscow uniformity of purpose, and to indicate that the relationship offered was the best that could be arranged. The intention was to signal to the Soviets that the Romanians desired, in the future, to play their own hand, Barladeanu would later recall. They took the occasion to tell the Soviets 'certain truths.' Among them, was an indication of how much Romania had lost as a result of the imposed economic 'collaboration' under *Sovrom* regime.¹²² The British Embassy assessed:

[t]hese exchanges were said to have been 'useful' and to have proceeded in a comradely and frank atmosphere which had assisted better mutual understanding and the strengthening of friendship between the two countries and parties. This rather tepid statement – by Soviet inter-bloc standards, suggest that there are still plenty of unresolved differences.¹²³

Upon return, the Minister for Foreign Affairs described the results of the Moscow talks as being satisfactory. The Romanian desiderata included better treatment for the Romanian minorities in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina¹²⁴ but the main object was simply to secure the Soviet acceptance of Romania's desire for economic independence.¹²⁵

¹²¹ *Scanteia* of July 7 announced the departure of a delegation of the CC of the Romanian Communist Party to the Soviet Union on July 6. FO 371/177622, N R 103138/18, J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 7 July 1964; The Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Swiss Ambassador, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/22, J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 15 July 1964. Soviet-Romanian talks in Moscow.

¹²² They had meetings with Podgorny, the president of the Supreme Soviet, Kosygin, the prime minister, Andropov, in charge of relations with socialist countries and Lesechko. Lavinia Betea, *Alexandru Barladeanu despre Dej, Ceausescu si Iliescu*, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 134-135.

¹²³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/19A. H. Trevelyan, British Embassy, Moscow, to Foreign Office, 15 July 1964.

¹²⁴ 'My reading of this telegram is that the Romanian leaders in Moscow only broached the question of better treatment for Romanians in the USSR probably as a hint that, if pressed beyond endurance

The Russians made some concessions and promised not to press the Romanians further on co-ordination.¹²⁶ There may have been a deal in which the Soviet Union offered to reduce pressure on Romania over CMEA policy in return for a cessation of anti-Soviet propaganda in Romania. It looked however as if the Romanians had once again won their point.¹²⁷ In exchange for the withdrawal of the Valev plan the Romanians committed to cooperate more fully in the CMEA.¹²⁸ *Izvestia* mentioned that Valev was a purely academic figure and his proposal for a lower Danubian economic complex did not enjoy the official backing of the Soviet government. Although presumably delighted by the gesture,¹²⁹ the Romanians seem to have known that the Russians were going to publish a disavowal of the Valev's proposal.¹³⁰

Shortly thereafter, on 27 September 1964, a party and government delegation led by Maurer departed for Peking to participate in the festivities occasioned by the fifteenth anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party. The delegation stopped for talks with Khrushchev in Moscow before proceeding on to Peking.¹³¹ 'Sincere and friendly exchange

on other issues, they could always retaliate by raising the question of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in public just as the Chinese are raising the question of other Russian acquisitions in the Far East.--- FO Minute TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/26 – Murray to Thompson, 13 Aug – The reason for Russia's tolerant attitude towards Romania is the former's preoccupation with her relation with China and with the West.

¹²⁵ Communiqué published in Romanian press on July 15 on the main object of the visit. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/22, J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to Foreign Office, 15 July 1964. Soviet-Romanian talks in Moscow.

¹²⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/19A. H. Trevelyan, British Embassy, Moscow, to Foreign Office, 15 July 1964.

¹²⁷ That was what the Yugoslavs hinted. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/18 (A), Bucharest to Foreign Office, 7 July 1964.

¹²⁸ In addition to the repudiation of Valev's article, the Soviet press published a long feature article on Romanian economic achievements. It looked like as if the Russians decided that it was time to be conciliatory towards the Romanians, Trevelyan commented from Moscow. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, N R 103138/19, Sir Trevelyan, Moscow, to Foreign Office, 7 July 1964.

¹²⁹ The Soviet Embassy in Bucharest took the 'almost unprecedented' step of sending to Western missions in Bucharest a copy of the *Izvestia* article. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, R 103138/21, J. I. McGhie, British Embassy Bucharest, to Charles Thompson, FO, 9 July 1964.

¹³⁰ The American charge d' Affairs mentioned to McGhie a conversation he had with Corneliu Manescu, the Foreign Minister, in front of Milatovic, the Yugoslav Ambassador, at the 4 July reception. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/21, J. I. McGhie, British Embassy Bucharest, to Charles Thompson, FO, 9 July 1964.

¹³¹ The delegation included Emil Bodnaras, Politburo member and vice president of the Council of Ministers, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, member of the CC and head of propaganda section, Dumitru Gheorghiu,

of views took place on problems of common interest' *Scanteia* indicated.¹³² The Romanian press reported prominently the enthusiastic welcome given to the delegation on its arrival in Peking. The Chinese must by now have realized that the Romanians were not 'Soviet stooges'.¹³³

The Romanians continued their skilful balancing between the Soviets and the Chinese. Romania's position suggested that the Romanian leaders wished to appear devoted to a policy of 'honest broker' between the two disputants. However, notwithstanding delegations, press reports and propaganda, Soviet-Romanian relations remained chilly.¹³⁴ Marx's manuscript "Notes about the Romanians", in which he criticized the Russians for helping to crush the Romanian revolutionary movements in the nineteenth century and for seizing Bessarabia in 1812, was printed by Bucharest in December 1964.¹³⁵ It could add only a frost on already chill relations.

Although the slow movement toward de-Sovietisation was obvious, Romanian officials continued to deny that they were moving out of the Soviet orbit. The British particularly noted signs of caution.¹³⁶

alternate CC member and Ambassador to Peking. RNA, CC of RCP, Chancery, Dossier 55/1964, vol. I, f. 10; Dossier 80/1964, ff. 1-3.

¹³² *Scanteia* carried on 29 September a long article by a Party historian ostensibly devoted to 'the First International and Its Historic Role.' After a general passage quoting Marx and Engels in support of the view that individual parties and countries should develop in different ways according to the condition prevailing in each without 'mechanically copying forms and methods from abroad,' provided that their actions are not prejudicial to the international Communist movement as a whole. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/28 A. J.D. Murray, Bucharest, to FO, 30 September 1964.

¹³³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/28 B.

¹³⁴ The reception offered at the Soviet embassy in Bucharest on 7 November with the occasion of anniversary of the October Revolution was attended only by two Romanian generals. The absence of other Romanian officers was noticeable since one table in the room at which the foreign Military Attaches were placed for supper remained empty. The Romanians claimed that they did not receive invitations. It was, apparently, merely a polite 'cover-up'. Actually, the Romanians deliberately boycotted the Russian party to demonstrate their resentment over the arrogance and ill-manners displayed by Marshal Grechko and his Service Mission who attended the Romanian Armed Forces Day. TNA, PRO, FO 371/177622, NR 103138/30. Murray to Smith, 19 November – Romanian-Soviet relations.

¹³⁵ Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceausescu. A Study in Political Leadership*, Lynne Rienner Publishers; Boulder&London, 1989, p. 62.

¹³⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/1, FO Minute, 20 April 1965, Visit by the Minister of State to Bulgaria and Romania.

The Romanian leadership shifted in 1960 from conformity within the CMEA to a more independent course generally. These developments originated in the decision of the Romanian leadership to resist the programme of economic integration adopted by CMEA in 1962, which assigned to Romania the function of a primarily agrarian country, supplying food and raw materials to her industrially more advanced partners. Romania's motivation, therefore, was primarily economic. Although relations between Romania and the Soviet Union deteriorated they were not critically bad. The Romanian leaders continued to support the Soviets on major ideological issues, especially on the importance of averting nuclear war. While pursuing a new policy based on an independent economic policy within Comecon, 60% of Romania's trade in mid-1960s continued with the Eastern European allies, especially the Soviet Union.¹³⁷

Romania's 'Declaration of Independence' asserted the right to develop a national policy consistent with its own interests and domestic requirements. With its emphasis on the equality and independence on all Communist Parties, the document was a manifesto of national Communism.¹³⁸ The Soviet Union could crush signs of divergence, as it had in Hungary in 1956, or it could tolerate difference up to the point where actual treachery to socialism was apprehended. The Soviets appear to have determined to tolerate the endurable. Abandonment of socialism, in any case, would have left the Romanian leadership, in potential, without a constituency. They would never dare to go so far.

Although interested in developing contacts with the West, the Romanians avoided tacking too close to the West. De Gaulle's France might have welcomed a more overt move. In London's view, while the Romanians 'do not wish to be openly regarded by the West as the favourite child of Eastern Europe,' they did not like any more being included

¹³⁷ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Visit of the Secretary of State to Romania, 2-7 October 1965. Annex A to Steering Brief, Romania-Background. FO Minute, Complete Set of Briefs for Mr. Thomson's visit.

¹³⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, FO Minute, Complete set of Briefs for Visit of the Minister of State, Thomson, to Romania, 2-7 October 1965.

in the category of the Soviet Bloc countries either as a manner of speech or where that term suggested that they were given the same treatment as other East European countries.¹³⁹ The Romanians thereafter focused on an improvement of relations with the Western democracies, particularly with Britain, France, and the United States.

¹³⁹ FO 371/182504, N 1054/47, FO Minutes, P.A. Rhodes and B.L. Crowe, 19 October 1965.

Romania singled out

In 1964 the Labour Party won the general elections by a majority of four seats. Harold Wilson became Prime Minister on 16 October and formed his first government.¹ One year after the Labour Government took power, the Foreign Minister, George Thomson, went to Romania and Bulgaria. Thomson's visit to Romania which took place between 2 and 7 October 1965 was the first by a Foreign Office Minister since the War. The purpose of the visit was to maintain the momentum of ministerial visits before the Secretary of State's projected visit. In fact, the British wanted to 'avoid disappointing the Romanians, who ascribe great importance to ministerial exchanges, and would look for political significance in the absence of a visit from a British Minister for so long after the change of Government in Britain'.² Thomson's visit was a 'primarily goodwill visit' to please the Romanians who did not get 'much ministerial attention' that year.³

A positive trend was evident in British-Romanian relations in the first half of the 1960s. Both parties hoped that bilateral relations would become closer and more cordial. Exchanges in cultural, artistic and scientific fields had got off to a good start. Diplomatic relations had improved and trade between the two countries had increased steadily. The main point of difference in bilateral relations was over outstanding financial claims and trade. However, negotiations which began in Bucharest in April 1960 continued in London, leading to the conclusion of a financial and a trade agreement on 10 November 1960.⁴ The financial agreement covered the following claims: nationalization (the oil

¹ The Romanian Ambassador in London conveyed the Prime Minister's Maurer congratulations to the Wilson on assuming his high office. TNA, PRO, PREM 13/3461, 6 November, 1964, T.E. Bridges.

² TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Complete set of Briefs for Thomson's visit. Brief no. R 1----Visit of the Minister of State to Romania, 2-7 October 1965. Steering Brief---Background and Aim of Visit; TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/3 c- Secretary of State, Visits to Eastern Europe, 24 May 1965.

³ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/28, FO Minute, H. F. T. Smith to Greenhil, 25 March 1965.

⁴ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 84/1960, f. 1.

companies excluded); reparation payments according to the Treaty of 1947 (the oil companies excluded); and compensations for personal injury. The agreement provided for the payment of 1.25 million in settlement of claims. Payment of the sum had to be completed by January 1967. The agreement did not cover a number of substantial claims in respect of some of which Romanian offer in earlier negotiations had been regarded as derisory. Other negotiations were scheduled for 1966 for hard cases, like the nationalisation of the oil industry.⁵ The follow-on commercial agreement, signed on 28 September, would be valid for three years. According to the later, Romania would export to Britain fresh and frozen vegetables and fruit, timber and furniture, clothing, shoes, cement, carpets, and would import machinery and equipment, rolled products, chemicals, wool and wool yarn.⁶

Outstanding claims included the oil companies claims (value sixty eight million pounds of which Shell was the main claimant), bonded debt claims of fifteen million pounds plus accrued and unpaid interest⁷ and certain other commercial and contractual debts. The British were aware that any settlement they were able to reach would certainly be for a far lower sum. The Romanians had persistently tried to link the British claims with the import of Romanian oil and suggested on numerous occasions that the atmosphere for the negotiation would be greatly improved if the British could agree to take oil in advance of the start of the negotiations. The 1960 Agreement was however concluded on the

⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Complete Set of Briefs for Thomson's visit, Brief No. R2, Anglo-Romanian trade.

⁶ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 84/1960, f. 1.

⁷ "The figure of 15 million was an estimate based on a Romanian informal statement made in 1956; only the Romanians can know what proportion of the sterling bounds they have bought back out of total issues of some 24 million outstanding at the time of default in 1939/40. To this should be added further claims in respect of United Kingdom holdings of Romanian assets in certain other currencies and in lei." TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Complete Set of Briefs for Thomson's visit, Brief No. R2, Anglo-Romanian trade.

understanding with the oil companies that the British Government would not consider Romanian oil imports until their claims were settled.

Although trade between Britain and Romania had increased steadily it remained small.⁸ Any substantial increase in Anglo-Romanian trade was unlikely unless the British decided to import oil products from Romania. The British government stood firm however on the policy of not accepting oil from the Communist countries, particularly ones that owed it money. A breach in this policy was made in 1963 when the British considered a Soviet proposal to buy ships from Britain which may have involved accepting oil from the Soviet Union.⁹ 'The principle that we should be prepared in certain circumstances to take Soviet oil might eventually be extended to Romania.' The first step was conditioned however by the settlement of oil claims. Another difficulty was represented by the fact that the Romanians who had a considerable refining capacity of their own wished to export oil products and not crude oil.¹⁰

The Romanians had shown interest in industrial cooperation, which, based on their expanding productive capacity and cheap labour, was supposed to lead to an increase in their exports. The Romanians were not however prepared to consider anything involving shared capital and management between themselves and Western firms; instead, they bought several complete plants from Britain, projects which were to be financed partly by

⁸ 'Our trade with Romania is small although it has been growing quite rapidly in recent years.' In 1965 trade was running at a higher level than before. Anglo-Romanian trade took place under the agreement covering the five years from October 1963 to September 1968. Negotiations on quotas took place annually.' TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Complete Set of Briefs for Thomson's visit, Brief No. R2, Anglo-Romanian trade.

⁹ In March 1965 the PM told Gromyko that there would be a possibility of a constructive discussion concerning the sale of oil to Britain and the sale of ships by Britain to the Soviet Union. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Complete Set of Briefs for Mr. Thomson's visit, Brief No. R2, Anglo-Romanian trade.

¹⁰ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Complete Set of Briefs for Mr. Thomson's visit, Brief No. R2, Anglo-Romanian trade.

the disposal of some of their products in Western markets.¹¹ The firms Rustyfa Ltd,¹² Consolidated Foundry Plant Ltd.¹³ and Petrocarbon Development Ltd.¹⁴ had supplied machinery and equipment for several Romanian plants totalling several million pounds.¹⁵

Although small, trade agreement was important for it could lead to the growth of contacts in other fields.¹⁶ Inter-parliamentary exchanges continued to be encouraged. A British parliamentary delegation, headed by Ian Mikardo, comprising three Labour and three Conservatives (Mikardo, N.G. Carmichael and A.E. Hunter from the Labour Party and J. Brewis, Rear Admiral Morgan Giles and Sir Eric Errington from the Conservative) visited Romania in November 1965 in return for a Romanian delegation visiting Britain in 1963.¹⁷ Accompanied by two members of the Grand National Assembly, the delegation was given a tour of Brasov, Sibiu and Cluj, taken to the Brazi refinery and the Babes-Bolyai University. Mikardo gave an interview to the Romanian political review 'Lumea' in

¹¹ 'This last and the sub-contracting of the manufacture of components in each other's countries are perhaps the most fruitful possibilities, but the Romanians have not given any clear idea of the forms of industrial cooperation they would favour. It would be useful to know more about what they have in mind.' TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/32, Complete Set of Briefs for Mr. Thomson's visit, Brief No. R2, Anglo-Romanian trade.

¹² Supply of machinery and equipment for a tyre factory located in Bucharest. The task was completed in 1963 and its value was 9 million pounds. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/8, P.E. Dougherty, the Board of Trade, 26 July 1965.

¹³ Complete sanitary ware factory constructed as part of industrial complex in suburbs of Bucharest. This firm built two other factories in the same area. The sanitary ware factory was completed in 1963. Value pounds 2 million. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/8, P.E. Dougherty, the Board of Trade, 26 July 1965.

¹⁴ Polystyrene plant located at Onesti (renamed Gheorghiu-Dej Town) was completed in 1964. Value pound 0,75 million. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/8, P.E. Dougherty, the Board of Trade, 26 July 1965.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182502, N 1054/7, FO Minute, P.A. Rhodes, 9 July 1965, Programme for Minister of State's visit to Romania 2-7 October 1965.

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182503, N 1054/26. Brief No. R2, Visit of the Minister of State to Romania, Anglo-Romanian Trade, Talking Points.

¹⁷ The visit took place between 2 and 12 November 1965. TNA, PRO, FO 371/182727, NR 1631/16, FO submission, 24 October 1965; 2 November 1965, Call on the Secretary of State by Ian Mikardo.

They were welcomed by Chivu Stoica, the President of the State Council, and 'treated to a long monologue on orthodox Party lines'. The reception offered by the Grand National Assembly was attended by the Head of the State Planning Committee, Roman Moldovan, who headed the Romanian delegation to London in May 1963, the Minister for Trade, Cioara, and the Minister for Petroleum Industries, Boaba.

which he underlined along with his impressions on Romania how the British were surprised at the intensive industrialisation of Romania.¹⁸

Not only did the Romanians ascribe great importance to ministerial exchanges with Western countries,¹⁹ they wanted ‘to discuss and to be seen to have discussed the main international issues’.²⁰ This was part of their purpose in participating so energetically in the exceptional level of diplomatic exchange evident by the mid-1960s. The purpose of all the activity, of course, was to underline the fact of Romania’s new found independence. At the ninth party congress, in July 1965, Romania was declared a socialist state rather than a People’s democracy, emphasizing the transition to a new era and stressing Romania’s status as a sovereign state without previous effusive references to the Soviet Union and the new ideological status – the same stage of development as the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

The Romanians, while trying to get recognition throughout the world as an independent nation, had developed a ‘nationalist sensitivity’, the British Ambassador noted.²¹ ‘They have,’ he thought, ‘a considerable chip on their shoulder about how unaware we are of the significance of Romania’s role in the Communist world,’ the British Minister of State mentioned in his report on his visit. The Romanians cultivated ‘a deliberate detachment, and were at pains to show that they had not taken sides in the Sino-Soviet split.’²² The Romanians had done their best to avoid being drawn into the divergence

¹⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182727, N R 1631/18, L. C. Glass, British Embassy Bucharest, to Howard Smith, Northern Department, 18 November 1965; NR 1631/19.

¹⁹ TNA, PRO, PREM 13/3461, Record of the meeting between the Foreign Secretary and the Romanian Foreign Minister at the Carlyle Hotel, New York, 12 October 1966-

²⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, John Chadwick’s despatch ‘A Picture of Rumania’ in view of the Secretary of State’s visit to Romania, 8-11 September 1968, annex D.

²¹ TNA, PRO, FO 371/182504, N 1054/54, L. C. Glass, British Embassy Bucharest to Howard Smith, Northern Department, 29 October 1965.

²² TNA, PRO, FO 371/182504, N 1054/54, George Thomson’s comments on his visit to Romania, 12 November 1965.

between the Soviet Union and China, the First Deputy Prime Minister, Alexandru Barladeanu, also pointed out to Harold Wilson during a meeting in London.²³

Britain had no such interest in seeking increased contact with Romania, but did find the Romanians to be unusually helpful collaborators. Diplomatic contact established that London shared more common ground with the Romanians than with other East Europeans.²⁴ The Romanian leaders were the most receptive to Western diplomatic overtures. On the Middle East, the Romanians did not follow the Warsaw Pact line. They maintained relations with Israel and argued for a settlement reached through direct contacts.²⁵ Similarly, the Romanians were 'realistic' in their approach to relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. Romania was the only East European country to recognise the FRG (in January 1967) and the West German government established trade missions with the Romanian government. Romania was the only Warsaw Pact state to respond to the FRG's early attempts at *Ostpolitik*.²⁶ The Romanians also had an interest in détente which was 'more enlightened than that of other members of the Warsaw Pact'. At the same time they held certain views such as the desirability of dismantling the blocs in Europe which the British regarded as unrealistic at that time.²⁷

British policy-makers portrayed themselves as being among the pioneers of a policy of fairly frequent exchanges of ministerial visits with the Soviet Union and East Europe.²⁸ However, British diplomats underestimated the degree to which a one-party state could stifle dissent without resorting to Stalinist-style police terror. The *nomenklatura*

²³ In one respect the Romanian representation had prevailed when the publication of the Suslov report had been delayed a few weeks. TNA, PRO, PREM 13/3461, Record of the meeting between the Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Alexandru Barladeanu, Romanian First Deputy Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street on 9 February 1966.

²⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, John Chadwick's despatch "A Picture of Rumania" (annex B).

²⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41. Visit of the Secretary of State to Romania (8-11 September 1968). Steering Brief.

²⁶ Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War. The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970*, The Royal Historical Society, The Boydell Press, 2009, p. 137.

²⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, John Chadwick's despatch "A Picture of Rumania" (annex B).

²⁸ G. Bennet, K.A Hamilton (eds.), *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Documents on British Policy Overseas: Britain and the Soviet Union*, Series III, vol. I: 1968-1972, pp. 439-440.

system within the USSR and East European country made ideological orthodoxy the prerequisite for advancement in the party and government hierarchies, industrial management, the armed forces, academia and throughout 'socialist' society, thereby inhibiting the growth of a more independent-minded, technocratic elite upon which British government officials had placed their hopes for reform within Eastern Europe.²⁹

Foreign Office officials hoped that Eastern bloc states would assert their independence and lose their economic and military ties to the USSR, but also wished this process to be a gradual one, controlled by the East European regimes rather than being driven by popular protest. By common consent Western countries opted for a policy of 'collective inaction' over Czechoslovakia in order not to exacerbate East-West tensions; this approach was reflected in the decision not to raise alert levels for the Alliance forces in the summer of 1968.³⁰

The British decided that their interests would not be furthered by any revolutionary upheavals, as any uprising similar to that in Hungary in 1956 would undermine the 'evolution of effective co-existence'.³¹ Romania and Yugoslavia were of particular concern to NATO officials since Nicolae Ceausescu and Tito condemned the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Nicolae Ceausescu was elected General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party after the sudden death of Gheorghiu-Dej, in March 1965. Gheorghiu-Dej brought Ceausescu onto the Central Committee in 1952. In 1954, he became a full member of the Politburo and eventually rose to occupy the second-highest position in the party hierarchy.

Ceausescu became soon a popular figure in Romania and also in the Western World, because of his independent foreign policy. In the 1960s, he eased press censorship

²⁹ Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War. The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970*, The Royal Historical Society, The Boydell Press, 2009, p. 142.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

and ended Romania's active participation in the Warsaw Pact (though Romania formally remained a member).

In July 1968, when the leaders of the Soviet Union and its allies issued the 'Warsaw Letter' which called for the preservation of one-party rule, Romania abstained.³² Ceausescu's denunciation of the invasion marked the apogee of Romanian defiance of the Soviet Union. He publicly branded the occupation as a 'shameful event in the history of the revolutionary movements'.³³ Romanian support for Czechoslovakia in the context of invasion of this country by the forces of the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria led to a serious worsening of relations with the Soviet Union to a point at which it seemed possible that the Russians might invade Romania.³⁴ It was at this juncture that the British Foreign Minister visited the country.

The Secretary of State's visit took place in circumstances in which Romania demonstrated once again that it was not subservient to the will of the Soviet Union, while indicating also that it had greatly come up in the world. Romania was now a single destination instead of being included in a group of two or three countries of Eastern Europe to be visited.³⁵ All were aware, of course, that the Brezhnev doctrine might equally be applied to Ceausescu as to Alexander Dubcek. It was not unlikely that the Russians would have liked to see Ceausescu replaced by 'someone more pliant to their wishes'. At a NATO meeting several members speculated about the possibility that the Russians might

³² To avoid the situation seen in 1956 when Soviet troops repressed an anti-communist uprising in Hungary, in August 1968 the united armies of the Warsaw Pact, made up of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and German Democratic Republic [GDR], intervened and used force to oust reformist Alexander Dubcek who wanted to implement economic, political and cultural reforms in Czechoslovakia. Dennis Deletant, *Romania under Communist Rule*, Bucharest, 1998, p.89.

³³ Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence. Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-73*, New York: Praeger, 1974, p. 745.

³⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, f. 249. John Chadwick, British Embassy Bucharest, to Michael Stewart, Principal Secretary of State, Bucharest, 27 July 1968. Visit of the Secretary of State to Romania, 8-11 September 1968, Steering brief; 'A Picture of Romania.'

³⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, John Chadwick, "A Picture of Rumania"(annex B).

engineer a coup against Ceausescu.³⁶ The Russians were determined to get rid of the Romanian regime by force if necessary, the French Permanent Representative to the United Nations maintained, notwithstanding the fact that it would have been difficult for the Soviets to remove Ceausescu since he had a strong Security apparatus at his command and had gained popularity in the country for his stance during the Czechoslovak crisis.³⁷ Perhaps, the Russians could have sought to prepare the way for such a development through propaganda and by employing other pressures such that discontent against Ceausescu developed.³⁸

At his meeting with the British Foreign Minister, and thereafter, Ceausescu showed great skill in making out a reasoned case for Romania's policies, calling for world peace, self-determination, non-interference, and friendship with all.³⁹ Although a convinced Communist, he shared the view that the Communist party had constantly to adapt itself to change, 'subject to keeping ideological essentials intact.'⁴⁰ Ceausescu set out to distance Romania from the Soviet Union and himself from Gheorghiu-Dej and gave reason to hope that the new regime, though equally nationalist, would be more relaxed and permissive than its predecessor. In essence, he continued the balancing act: seeking distance from the Soviet Union, while maintaining control domestically, looking to a nationalist constituency to support continued autocracy; justifying all through continued economic development and by reference to foreign policy successes and prestige.

Ceausescu took advantage of Gheorghiu-Dej's policy and of the risks his predecessor had assumed, the Prime Minister Maurer believed. "Ceausescu never

³⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/57, f. 64. NATO Meeting on U.N. matters, 13 September, 1968.

³⁷ At a NATO meeting several members thought that this would be easier in a rigid regime like the Romanian one than in the more democratic circumstances which existed in Czechoslovakia. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/57, f. 25. H. F. T. Smith to Maitland, 6 September 1968, Will the Russians try to remove Ceausescu?

³⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/57, f. 25. H. F. T. Smith to Maitland, 6 September 1968. 'Will the Russians try to remove Ceausescu?'

³⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, John Chadwick's despatch "A Picture of Rumania' in view of the Secretary of State's visit to Romania, 8-11 September 1968, annex D.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

mentioned Gheorghiu-Dej since April 1964, so sorry he was that it was not him who have proclaimed the 'Declaration of Independence'. He never talked about it publicly."⁴¹ Ceausescu had however referred to the independence of Romania on every occasion such as the anniversaries of the Romanian Communist Party, underlining that Romania placed its own national interests above the international one, an interesting shift implying the rejection of the communist past policy.⁴²

Ceausescu struck 'a risky but brilliant note when he condemned the Soviet led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. He could have done nothing better calculated to rally national support.⁴³ In 1968 the Romanian Communist Party policy was popular particularly for its policy of independence from the Soviet Union and defiance on behalf of another errant and independence minded Bloc member.⁴⁴ Probably responding to the people's expectation but more likely inspired by events in Czechoslovakia, the Romanian leadership even took cautious steps towards modest liberalization.

Much stress is put on the development of socialist democracy that is the free exchange of views among Party members about questions still open to discussion and socialism humanism which appears to mean the free expression of Communist personality. There seems to be a growing confidence in the possibility of expressing opinions, as long as they are not anti-Communist.⁴⁵

A programme of limited decentralization of local government and of industry was set up. This was combined with the maintenance of Party control over the councils and boards on whom powers were being devolved. Efforts were made to prove that the Romanian Communist Party was free of dogmatism and devoted to the good of all the

⁴¹ Maurer, Romanian Prime Minister between 1961 and 1974, Lavinia Betea, *Maurer si lumea de ieri [Maurer and the Yesterday World. Testimonies about the Stalinization of Romania]*, Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, pp. 181-182.

⁴² This also represented an interesting shift implying the rejection of the communist past policy that proclaimed Romania a multinational country. "Rumania puts her interest first", *The Times*, 10 May 1966, p. 8.

⁴³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report No. 149/77 by Reginald Seconde, 7 March 1977. First impressions on Romania.

⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, John Chadwick, "A Picture of Rumania," Annex B.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

people. Doubts were cast on the integrity of the Party hero, Gheorghiu-Dej, although the view among the Party members was that 'his sins were committed at the behest of the Russians'.⁴⁶

Western approval notwithstanding, Ceausescu had gone about as far as possible, and risked over-tipping. By 1971, he was given significant reason to believe that he would be next after Dubcek. The Soviet Union sent military signals to Bucharest that the Red Army would mount a major exercise on its southern border with Romania. During "South-71", as the exercise was called, the Soviet Union mobilized twelve ground forces Divisions, and the Soviet Black Sea Fleet operated off the Romanian coast. It requested, but Romania denied, permission to transport three Divisions across Romania to Bulgaria for the manoeuvres. "South-71" was an indication of Soviet displeasure with Ceausescu for making his first visit to China and for maintaining good relations with that communist rival, capping his previous deviations and defiance. Another military manoeuvre, the "Opal-71," followed in August 1971 during which Soviet, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian units included military exercises along Hungary's border with Romania.⁴⁷

In short order, however, Ceausescu's popularity resulting from his firm and courageous opposition to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had dimmed and a muted criticism replaced it. Meanwhile, the danger from within the Warsaw Pact continued. There was a paradox in Ceausescu's status. While enjoying the support of his people, he was almost completely isolated within the Socialist Bloc, which was hardly surprisingly. He received a deliberately chilly reception from the Soviet leaders at Moscow on his way back from China in June 1971. In August of that year he was excluded from the summit

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/41, John Chadwick, "A Picture of Rumania," Annex B.

⁴⁷ *Sfarsitul perioadei liberale a regimului Ceausescu: Minirevolutia culturala din 1971* [The End of the Liberal period of Ceausescu's regime: Mini-cultural revolution of 1971], Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, Bucharest, 2005, p. 16.

conference in Crimea. In September 1971 Brezhnev made a tour of Yugoslavia, Hungary and Bulgaria, pointedly leaving out Romania.⁴⁸

Romania responded with diplomacy. A series of high-level exchanges produced an improvement of Ceausescu's relations with the leaders of the Communist Bloc during 1972. In February Janos Kadar led a Hungarian Party and Governmental delegation to Romania – a notable change from the anxious days in 1971 when the Hungarians were used by the Soviets as the principal critics of Romanian policy. In May Eric Honecker brought an East German Government delegation to Romania. And in August Ceausescu was invited to that year's summit conference in the Crimea and had private talks with Brezhnev as well. Later in August he also had talks with Todor Zhivkov, both in Bulgaria and in Romania.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, there continued to be little change domestically. Although there was some liberalisation in 1968, the regime was conservative by nature and the Communist party remained in total control of the country. This did not change. Ceausescu's status was unique in post-war Romania. Meanwhile, a cult of personality was emerging unique in Eastern Europe since the death of Stalin, and more obvious than anything Stalin attempted. As Secretary General of the Communist Party and President of the Council of State, posts held since 1965 and 1967 respectively, Ceausescu had absolute executive power. He was also President of the Socialist Unity Front and had himself named President of the Supreme Council of Economic and Social Development. Ceausescu was also Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and had assumed direct control of the State Security organs. Essentially he was a little Stalin, although Stalin was satisfied with the fact of power without so obviously accumulating, advertising and enjoying it.

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, Diplomatic Report no. 313/73, British Ambassador in Bucharest to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 5 June 1973.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

A peasant's son from the straggling village of Scornicesti in the county of Olt, with little formal education, Ceausescu succeeded in controlling the Communist Party.⁵⁰ A British diplomat was struck by the way in which he dominated his colleagues and they deferred to him, drawing an analogy with Henry VIII and his advisers. Displaying an air of 'supreme self-confidence and joviality,' Ceausescu gave 'the impression of being in complete control.' He had also the ability to switch from banter to something a good deal tougher at a moment's notice.⁵¹

Within a few years of taking power Ceausescu was proclaimed 'the most dear and beloved son of the Romanian people'. In January 1973, the University of Bucharest awarded him an honorary doctorate for his work in internal and foreign policy and for modernising the education system.' 'Torrents of flowery phrases' could be heard at the ceremony occasioned by Ceausescu's fifty-fifth birthday celebrated on 26 January 1973 with extraordinary pomp.⁵² 'Letters from Romanians' congratulated the 'beloved Ceausescu' on his birthday. 'Perhaps these early expressions of congratulation and the doctorate are intended as gentle encouragement to others, including foreign countries, to make their contribution on the day,' the British Embassy considered.⁵³

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 4. J.F. Podolier, East European Section, Research Department, to A. F. Green, EESD, FCO, 25 January 1973.

⁵¹ At the annual Hunt organised on 23 January 1971 for the Heads of Missions by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ceausescu appeared not to miss any opportunity of jokes at the American, Russian and Chinese Ambassadors' expense. Those who had not participated in the hunt before had to go through an 'initiation' ceremony involving the 'victim' bending while selected 'initiates' symbolically beaten the 'victim' on the backside as shots were fired in the air. "Ceausescu reserved the final blow for himself which he usually accompanied by a joke. In the case of a British diplomat the joke concerned the inadvisability of Britain joining the Common Market. Ceausescu also 'reserved the right to say who shall wield the stick first? When the Czech Ambassador submitted to his treatment, Ceausescu passed the stick to the Russian Ambassador with the remark, 'Here, you do it, you are used to it.' It raised considerable laughter all round, but the Russian took it in good heart." TNA, PRO, FCO 28/1496, British Embassy Bucharest, R.M. Russell to J.L. Bullard, East European & Soviet Department, 26 January 1971, Impressions of Ceausescu.

⁵² TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 4. J.F. Podolier, East European Section, Research Department, to A. F. Green, EESD, FCO, 25 January 1973.

⁵³ Despite the massed ovations, many ordinary Romanians clearly feel that the whole business has been grossly overdone.' TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 5. A.A. Rowell, British Embassy Bucharest, to A.F. Green, EESD, 30 January 1973. Fifty Five Today.

Seeking to perform as expected, Ceausescu's birthday was also given extraordinary international recognition. 'For a fortnight before the Birthday, international salutations were solicited by Romanian officials at all levels, and in particular by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, the Polish Ambassador, was approached by the Chief of Protocol for assistance and enrolled two or three other Ambassadors as whippers-in. The Deputy Foreign Ministers and other senior officials helped with the canvassing.⁵⁴ In the event, a large number of enthusiastic telegrams suited the Romanians 'requests'. The Soviet, East German, Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Mongolian leaders sent fraternal greetings through their Ambassadors. Some few provided sarcastic comments in protest at being forced into the Romanians' personality cult. Two senior Soviet diplomats went so far as to compare Ceausescu's personality cult with Stalinism.⁵⁵ While virtually all diplomats were approached by the Romanians, the British Ambassador received no request. The omission was deliberate, the British believed, and was 'intended to rub in the absence of high-level contacts in our case.'

Mr. Harold Wilson [leader of the opposition] too sent a message, thus focusing attention on Her Majesty's Government's silence. 'However, we were not isolated. The French (surprisingly), Danish, Norwegian, Belgian and Spanish Governments apparently kept their heads, and like us contented themselves with a personal message from their respective Ambassadors. But in the French case, Mr. Schuman may well be bringing a special message with him when he arrives today for an official visit.'⁵⁶

⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 5. A.A. Rowell, British Embassy Bucharest, to A.F. Green, EESD, 30 January 1973.

⁵⁵ Mao-Tse Tung with a teasing message praising Ceausescu for 'defying brutal force' headed a long list of well-known international names which included Sadat, President Leone and Foreign Minister Medici of Italy, Nyerere, Tito, Nixon, Bhutto, Castro, Brandt, Tanaka of Japan, Mintoff, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, Todor Jovkov, Gierak, President Jonas of Austria, Kekkonen, Gowan, Boumedienne, Sekou Toure, Seretse Khama, Suharto, Golda Meir, Waldheim, Allende, Mobutu and Kaunda. The names of "Nixon" and "Brandt" were underlined in the dispatch such as "the Soviet, East German, Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Mongolian leaders only sent greetings through their Ambassadors", "Mr. Harold Wilson," "The French (surprisingly)," "like us contented themselves with a personal message from their respective Ambassadors". TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 5. A.A. Rowell, British Embassy Bucharest, to A.F. Green, EESD, 30 January 1973.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Were there any reasons for mounting the ‘gargantuan manifestations of adoration and adulation,’ including mass demonstrations, festive reunions, banquets, receptions and congratulatory resolutions and messages? Why had the Romanian leaders decided that such a manifestation was desirable at that particular time?

Externally, the Romanians were not under pressure from the Russians or anyone else, so there was ‘no impelling need for the nation to rally round its leader and raise him on high.’ Internally there were no signs of opposition serious enough to call forth an overwhelming demonstration of support. A likely explanation was that the Romanians wanted to play a leading role in the negotiations for a new system of security and cooperation in Europe and a reduction in military confrontation. Demonstrating Ceausescu’s stature was a means of reinforcing national influence. Thus, there may have been a deliberate intention of demonstrating Ceausescu’s unquestioned position as the leader of modern Romania, supported by the entire nation, in order to make his authority indisputably clear to the Russians and to any dissidents at home.⁵⁷

Dynastic socialism became a reality with the appointment of Elena Ceausescu member of the Political Bureau in 1973. In 1974 Ceausescu was finally ‘elected’ president of the republic. By then, Prime Minister Maurer had lost his state and party positions, as had the most of the technocrats who were replaced by Ceausescu loyalists. The eleventh Congress of the RCP in 1974 marked the beginning of a presidential regime based on dynastic socialism and a personality cult.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 1, D.E. Ashe to J.L. Bullard, EESD, FCO, 22 February 1973, Ceausescu Fifty-fifth Birthday.

Ceausescu was ‘a phenomenon of general interest’ and Romania’s position in Eastern Europe was ‘sufficiently significant’ for the despatch to deserve wider circulation.’ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 12, D.R. Ashe, British Embassy Bucharest to Alec Douglas-Home, 5 June 1973, ‘Ceausescu: The man. Even the waves whisper his name.’

⁵⁸ Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria romanilor de la origini pana in zilele noastre*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 7.

Meanwhile, Ceausescu's Romania continued to prove anxious for political consultation at all levels with the British and the development of cultural, scientific and technical relations.⁵⁹ A sudden visit to London in May 1974 by two of Ceausescu's confidants and subsequent visits by other Romanian representatives to Geneva and Brussels indicated that a 'diplomatic offensive' was underway.⁶⁰ Ceausescu gradually came to rely on a court of intelligent but sycophantic advisers loyal to him.⁶¹ Two of them, Stefan Andrei, Secretary of the Central Committee responsible for foreign relations⁶² and Vasile Pungan, formerly Ambassador in London,⁶³ were entrusted with the mission of developing Romania's links with the West. Besides establishing political contact with the new Labour Government at the highest level, their visit seemed to have the purpose of promoting Romania's views on the CSCE (The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) and concerning the enabling machinery.⁶⁴ The two emissaries announced that they

⁵⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f. 5. J. L. Bullard, East European & Soviet Department, to R.B. Dorman, British Embassy Bucharest. Visit of Andrei and Pungan to London 2-4 May 1974. The Secretary of State's meeting with Stefan Andrei (Secretary of the Party responsible for Foreign Affairs) and Pungan, on 3 May 1974.

⁶⁰ The Foreign Office reacted with surprise at the announcement of the sudden visit of the two. 'We were a little puzzled at first by the sudden appearance of these Romanians,' TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f. 11. A. F. Green, East European & Soviet Department, to Mac Shea, Bucharest, 10 May 1974.

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, ff. 13-14. J.L. Bullard, Eastern European and Soviet Department to Derick R. Ashe, British Embassy, Bucharest, 20 June 1973.

FCO 28/2316, f. 14, R. D. Wilkinson, EESD to J.L. Bullard, 19 June 1973.

⁶² Stefan Andrei was believed to be among the three most important figures under Ceausescu. As Secretary of the CC responsible for foreign relations, he ranked above the Foreign Minister and eclipsed Macovescu in foreign policy matters. He had travelled to France in 1973 at the invitation of the French Socialist party and to FRG two times in 1974 for discussion with the SPD, the Federal German Government and Chancellor Brandt. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f. 2. Despatch from Bucharest and f.3. Personality note.

⁶³ Vasile Pungan was a personal adviser to Ceausescu. As Minister in London between 1966 and 1972 he proved particularly active in the commercial field, being, according to FO, 'constructive and helpful,' 'affable and friendly.' Pungan was previously Counsellor in Washington (between 1959 and 1962) and Director of the West European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1963-66). TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f.3. Personality note. J.L. Bullard, East European & Soviet Department, to Alexander, Goulding and J. Killick.

⁶⁴ 'Subjects for discussion could include Ceausescu's proposed visit to Britain, need for detente, CSCE, and the recent Warsaw Pact meeting where Romania, although was certainly put under considerable pressure to conform on military, political and economic matters, resisted successfully. Emphasis could be primarily on prospects for possible major economic cooperation ventures, e.g. aircraft industry, nuclear power, petrochemicals (Rudy Sternberg). TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f.3. Despatch from Bucharest. Visit of Andrei and Pungan to London 2-4 May 1974.

were carrying a personal message from Ceausescu to Prime Minister Harold Wilson, and invited him to visit Romania.⁶⁵

CSCE was by then at its crucial phase. The Romanians, in marked contrast to other members of the Warsaw Pact, refused to toe the Soviet line. 'They may have made great play with this show of independence,' the British believed. 'Their initiatives have not necessarily been of help to the West and, while we have maintained friendly contact with the Romanian delegation in Helsinki and Geneva, we have on occasion had to disagree...'⁶⁶ The Romanians were in favour of the establishment of a working body which would facilitate participation by all interested in European security. That way 'the danger that the solution of European problems would be reserved for the two big powers' would be avoided. The British and Romanians were thinking alike on this point, the Prime Minister assessed. But the task remitted to a permanent body depended on a considerable extent on the success of the conference.⁶⁷

In London, Ceausescu's men moved quickly to do their master's bidding. Andrei congratulated James Callaghan on his new appointment.⁶⁸ As Foreign Secretary and chairman of the Labour Party, he could do much to improve Anglo-Romanian relations. Callaghan assured Andrei that 'the exchange of the shadow for the substance in his office would make no difference to his outlook or his approach to political problems. Recalling the conversation he had with Ceausescu in Bucharest in 1973, Callaghan maintained that

⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f. 2. Despatch from Bucharest; FCO 28/2553, f. 5. J. L. Bullard, East European & Soviet Department [EESD], to R.B. Dorman, British Embassy Bucharest. Visit of Andrei and Pungan to London 2-4 May 1974.

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f.3. J.L. Bullard, East European & Soviet Department, to Alexander, Goulding and J. Killick.

Brief covering bilateral and international matters for PM's meeting with Pungan and Andrei, on 3 May 1974.

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f.8. Record of a meeting between the Prime Minister and Stefan Andrei (Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist party), on 3 May 1974.

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f. 10. A. F. Green, East European & Soviet Department, to Mac A.Shea, Bucharest, 10 May 1974. Record of a meeting between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Stefan Andrei, Secretary of the CC of the RCP and Vasile Pungan, personal adviser of President Ceausescu, held on 3 May 1974 at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

‘some things the President had said had been borne out by events. The British government was also interested in developing bilateral relations further, Callaghan assured the envoys.’⁶⁹

On the CSCE Callaghan realised that the exchanges in the field of human relationship presented a special problem for some members of the Warsaw Pact. Callaghan recalled that “one East European leader had said to him last year ‘We encourage our people to visit the West because, until they do, they are under illusion that even the fences there are made of ‘sausages.’” The Conference would have greater value if it could produce something more tangible. Human as well as organisational exchanges were in the interest of Britain, Romania and indeed the whole Warsaw Pact and NATO. The inviolability of frontiers was a step. If progress on other items could be achieved, then it could be very appropriate to draw the Conference to a conclusion in July.

Romania was in favour of encouraging both human and organisational contacts, traffic of ideas and information, Andrei replied. The Romanians rejected racism, fascism, violence and hatred among nations. They considered that it was the responsibility of each state not to allow such ideas to be disseminated at home or exported abroad. Romania also put great emphasis on the need to reach some decision about the institutional follow-up to the CSCE. In this too he was instructed by President Ceausescu to seek the support of Britain. Exchanges of persons and ideas would not solve all the problems. Inviolability of frontiers needed to be solved also, Andrei pointed out. Romania was seeking a strong European security system and considered it necessary to ensure that a framework should be set for participation by all European states. Britain did wish to see a follow-up to the

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f. 10. A. F. Green, East European & Soviet Department, to Mac A. Shea, Bucharest, 10 May 1974. Record of a meeting between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Stefan Andrei, Secretary of the CC of the RCP and Vasile Pungan, personal adviser of President Ceausescu on economic relations with Western countries, held on 3 May 1974 at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. James Callaghan, J.L. Bullard, M.O'D. B. Alexander, T. McNally (for part of the time), Andrei, Pungan, Popa.

CSCE, Callaghan maintained. It was only a question of what kind of follow-up it should be.⁷⁰

In the 1970s British policy-makers considered themselves among the ‘pioneers of a policy of fairly frequent exchanges of ministerial visits with the Soviet Union and East Europe’.⁷¹ This was the rationale behind Britain’s own *Ostpolitik*. After the Second World War Britain had lost its position in the world, Julian Amery, Minister of State of FCO, admitted during his meeting with Ceausescu in Bucharest in 1973. Dean Acheson’s assertion was however no longer valid. Acheson had died before seeing that Britain had found its place by joining the Common Market, and working there energetically to lay out the lines of a new Europe.⁷² Britain’s entry into the European Community in 1973 represented an example of Britain’s adjustment to the new realities.⁷³

Within this new reality, it was clear, economic interests were paramount. The fact of economic weakness outweighed any fear of foreign encroachments on British sovereignty. Trade balance was a matter of concern for the British decision makers and increasing exports to the Soviet Bloc was a means of boosting sales of products leading to an improvement of trade and protection of jobs. Eastern Europe provided an area for rebuilding the foundation of a more active British role in international politics.

Ceausescu however remained dissatisfied with the pace of the development of economic relations with Britain.⁷⁴ Romania’s trade with the Federal Republic of Germany

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, f. 12. A. F. Green, East European & Soviet Department, to Mac A. Shea, Bucharest, 10 May 1974. Record of a meeting between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Stefan Andrei, Secretary of the CC of the RCP and Vasile Pungan, personal adviser of President Ceausescu, held at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 3 May 1974.

⁷¹ G. Bennet, K.A. Hamilton (eds.), *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Documents on British Policy Overseas: Britain and the Soviet Union*, series III, vol. I: 1968-1972, p. 439.

⁷² Record of the meeting between Nicolae Ceausescu and Julian Amery, Minister of State at FCO. RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 109/1973, ff. 12-13.

⁷³ After joining the Community on 1 January 1973, the referendum called in 1975 by Harold Wilson confirmed Britain’s membership. Paul Johnson (ed.), *Twentieth Century Britain. Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, London, New York: Longman, 1994, p. 340.

⁷⁴ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 109/1973, f. 24. Nicolae Ceausescu and Julian Amery, Minister of State of FCO, Record of Conversation, 22 June 1973.

was four times bigger than that between Romania and Britain.⁷⁵ Trade imbalance, moreover, was an increasing concern. Imports from Britain were approximately twice in value to exports to Britain. Foodstuffs, the products of light industry and wood products were the main exports, and these needed to grow and diversify. Romanians wanted especially to enlarge their export of manufactured goods.⁷⁶ The British had supported a generalised custom preference of the European Community for trade with Romania.⁷⁷

The Romanian regime demonstrated a continued commitment to improved relations and more integral ties with Western Europe. 'The Romanians had developed a hyper-active foreign policy,' the British Ambassador, J.C. Petersen, considered in his annual review for 1975.⁷⁸ Ceausescu's incessant travels to the West provoked a crescendo of return visits to Romania. Visits to Bucharest by President Ford,⁷⁹ the Prime Minister of France, Ministers of Defence from Britain,⁸⁰ Italy, France and Greece and the American Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stood out from a long list. All these indicated an increased readiness of the Western leaders to single out Romania as a special case worth courting.

Ceausescu had an uncanny ability to get close to American and British politicians such as Richard Nixon⁸¹ and Harold Wilson. Learning about Ceausescu's desire to meet

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ RNA, CC of RCP, Department for Foreign Relations, Dossier 235/1973, ff. 57-62.

⁷⁷ RNA, CC of RCP, Department of Foreign Relations, Dossier 109/1973, ff. 8-9. Nicolae Ceausescu and Julian Amery, Minister of State of FCO. Amery's visit to Romania, 20-24 June 1973.

⁷⁸ FCO 28/2911, ENR 014/1, J.C. Petersen, British Embassy Bucharest, to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Annual Review for Romania, 1 January 1976, f. 1.

⁷⁹ From the Romanian point of view the most important Western visitor was President Ford. His arrival accompanied by Kissinger followed closely on the passage through Congress of the Romania Trade Bill which granted most favoured nation status to Romania.

⁸⁰ Four British Ministers, including the Defence Secretary, Mason, visited Romania in 1975. Mason visited Romania in April 1975. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3075, f. 33, Romanian Ambassador's dinner for the PUS, 18 May 1977. Briefs by B.G. Cartledge, Eastern European and Soviet Department, FCO, 17 May 1977. Brief on Bilateral Relations (annex A).

⁸¹ Nixon went to Romania for two days, between 2 and 3 August 1969, after an Asian tour. It was the first visit ever paid by an American President to a Communist State and, apart from President Roosevelt's journey to the Yalta Conference in 1945, the only visit ever paid by an American President in office to a Communist country. TNA, PRO, FCO 7/1425, Visit of Mr. Nixon to Asia & Romania, Folio 34, ENR

him at the London airport, on 12 June 1975, in a transit stop on his way back from a tour of Mexico and Brazil, Wilson was prepared to go to Heathrow against the objections of his staff in order to meet his friend.⁸² The Foreign and Commonwealth Office indicated that such a meeting would be a grave breach of protocol. 'Such a visit to the Airport by the Prime Minister, and everyone knows they are very rare, is in no way commensurate with the state of our relations with Romania'. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office also believed that since Ceausescu was 'apparently engaged in a personality cult in his country' he was 'sticking out for a visit by the Prime Minister to the Airport,' as 'part of his personal self-aggrandizement'. Wilson was prepared in turn to make an exception in this case, 'in view of his personal acquaintance of President Ceausescu and their previous meeting in Romania.'⁸³

In fact, Wilson did rather better than travel to suburban London. He invited Ceausescu for breakfast at Chequers, the country residence of the British Prime Minister, and met with him there. British officials did all they could 'to make the visit a success and an event of political significance.' Ceausescu and his large senior entourage were regarded as official state guests and the Lord-in-Waiting had called in at the breakfast to greet the

3/304/2 Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Whitehall Distribution, Laskey to Stewart, Bucharest, 7 August 1969.

⁸² "At the end of May, the Romanian Ambassador in London called to ask whether it was possible for a meeting to be arranged between the PM and Ceausescu on the latter's return from Brazil and Mexico. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office commented that that was a rather unusual initiative on Ceausescu's part and that they believed it was useful if some way could be found of meeting his proposal. I do not think it is appropriate to suggest, even if you are prepared to contemplate this, that you should go to the airport to meet President Ceausescu there." TNA, PRO, PREM 16/637, f. 1, Visit by President Ceausescu, P.R.H. Wright to Prime Minister, 28 May 1975.

"...it would be very difficult indeed for the PM to spare the time that day to get to London Airport. (Although I did not, of course, make this point to the Ambassador, I doubt whether it would be appropriate to ask the PM to make a journey to the Airport for the President of Romania)... The Ambassador was most insistent that this message should be regarded as a personal one for the PM and that no official notification should be made to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the present." TNA, PRO, PREM 16/637, Visit by President Ceausescu, P.R.H. Wright, 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, to R.N. Dales, FCO, 29 May 1975.

⁸³ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/637, Visit by President Ceausescu, P.R.H. Wright, 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, to R.N. Dales, FCO, 30 May 1975.

Romanian delegation on behalf of HM The Queen.⁸⁴ The hastily contrived arrangements actually worked quite smoothly. Given Ceausescu's susceptibilities, the British paid extra special attention to presentation and protocol.⁸⁵

Within the space of four hours the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary talked with Ceausescu and some of his most senior advisers. The 'breakfast' at Chequers was a quite remarkable success within obvious limitations. It was a foreign policy conclave of considerable consequence. Ceausescu had a substantial and wide ranging discussion with Wilson, demonstrating his grasp of international issues such as the CSCE and the Middle East and the independence of Romanian thinking on these matters.⁸⁶

A large number of senior business executives were invited ('corralled' might be a more accurate term) by the Romanian Embassy for discussions after breakfast. Ceausescu addressed the assembled gathering with a few generalities on Anglo-Romanian trade. Approximately fifty high ranking British businessmen joined in the discussions and were able to register at least an '*acte de presence*' and to hear the President's address, a fact which they would be able to quote to their own advantage in the future. Nevertheless, Romania was still 'far from being an important market for Britain even in comparison to the other CMEA countries'. Both sides in the discussion hoped to change that. They would

⁸⁴ The PM extended an invitation to the President and his wife to join him and Mrs. Wilson for breakfast at Chequers on 12 June. The PM wished that the breakfast be small and informal. Eventually, the PM, Secretary of State, Hattersley, and Wright were joined by Ceausescu, Macovescu (the Romanian Ambassador), and the interpreter. TNA, PRO, FC0 28/2750, f. 11 A, B.G. Cartledge, Eastern European & Soviet Department to the Private Secretary of the Prime Minister, 6 June 1975, Visit of President Nicolae Ceausescu and Mrs. Ceausescu.

⁸⁵ The official party included the Vice-Premier, Oprea, one of the President's 'inner circle,' the Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Macovescu, the Minister of Education and Culture and other senior members of the governmental hierarchy. TNA, PRO, FC0 28/2750, f. 11 A, B.G. Cartledge, Eastern European & Soviet Department to Private Secretary of the Prime Minister, 6 June 1975, Visit of President Nicolae Ceausescu and Mrs. Ceausescu, 12 June 1975; TNA, PRO, FC0 28/2750, f. 47, B.G. Cartledge, EESD, FCO, to J. C. Petersen, C.M.G. Bucharest, 11 July 1975. Visit of President Ceausescu's visit to Britain.

⁸⁶ TNA, PRO, FC0 28/2750, f. 47, B.G. Cartledge, EESD, FCO, to J. C. Petersen, C.M.G. Bucharest, 11 July 1975. Visit of President Ceausescu's visit to Britain.

have the opportunity to continue the discussion during the projected Wilson's visit to Romania that autumn.⁸⁷

Prime Minister Wilson's visit to Romania together with his wife marked a new foreign policy departure for Britain.⁸⁸ It was the first visit by a British Prime Minister to an Eastern European state other than the Soviet Union since the Second World War.⁸⁹ An important factor in the Prime Minister's decision to visit Romania was its independent foreign policy.⁹⁰ Indicating the 'energetic and imaginative efforts' of Ceausescu and the Romanian ministers to build an 'increasingly close, fruitful and mutually profitable relationship', Wilson underlined the importance of exchanging views on almost any subject of international importance. The Prime Minister was particularly interested in Ceausescu's view on Soviet policies and concerning Sino-Soviet relations.

While Wilson talked with Ceausescu high politics mostly in restricted session, the Under-Secretaries of the Department of Trade, Deakins, and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Strang, held separate talks with their opposite numbers. An agreement on financial issues was also reached, and from the British perspective this was probably the most important results of the visit since the Romanian debt had remained a bone of contention between the two sides for thirty years. Although he gave specific instructions to the Romanian negotiators that they should agree to the British formulation, Ceausescu claimed subsequently that the financial arrangements proved to be very disadvantageous for Romania. The Romanians 'had perhaps been too generous over the financial claims issue,' Ceausescu assessed. Wilson replied that the British had been equally generous so

⁸⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2750, f. 47, B.G. Cartledge, EESD, FCO, to J. C. Petersen, C.M.G. Bucharest, 11 July 1975. Visit of President Ceausescu's visit to Britain.

⁸⁸ Ceausescu's stopover visit of June was a useful and auspicious overture to the PM's proposed visit to Romania. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2750, f. 25- Programme for visit of President and Mrs. Ceausescu, 12 June 1975.

⁸⁹ Opening statement at talks with President Ceausescu on 16 September 1975. TNA, PRO, PREM 16/636.

⁹⁰ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/636, The Prime Minister visit to Romania: September 1975, Part 2.

the both sides might therefore burry the problem as being solved to the 'mutual disadvantage of both sides.'⁹¹ Ceausescu may have expected to obtain in exchange credits with a lower interest rate than that generally permissible, since Romania was still classified as a developing country. 'Britain too was a developing country as far as the exploitation of oil was concerned', Wilson replied. He added that that was a field in which cooperation with Romania could be mutually advantageous. British businessmen were especially aware of the possibilities of mutual cooperation in the petrochemical field.⁹²

In the end, Wilson and Ceausescu signed a Long Term Cooperation Agreement, which was a ten-year agreement on economic, industrial, and technical cooperation. The two sides expected a growth in trade over the duration of the agreement of two and half times. There was a vast scope for profitable economic collaboration for both sides: the production of aero engines for civilian purposes, equipment for nuclear power station, machine tool industry, heavy machinery, coal. Joint Ventures based both in Romania and in Britain and operating in third markets could also lead to mutual advantages.⁹³

Many Briton still remained distrustful of the Romanian regime. Objections were not economic, but political. However much it might have wanted more trade with Britain, and however much British businessmen and politicians might have liked to increase the value of British exports, it was not clear that the Ceausescu regime was any more willing than its East Bloc neighbours to abide by the Helsinki agreements which provided for free movement of people, information and ideas. Ceausescu's authority had increased to the

⁹¹ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/636. Note of meeting between the PM and Ceausescu, 16 Sept. 1975 - the restricted meeting.

⁹² Romania had considerable natural resources, large deposits of oil, natural gas, coal, iron, ore, bauxite, and a number of other minerals in commercial quantities, underlining that the most important of these was the oil, of which thirteen million tons were produced annually. TNA, PRO, BN 76, piece number 65, 1972-1979. Report made by Walter Oakes in March 1972.

⁹³ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/636.

level that he was the only person who could make ‘an instant decision’ in any matter of bilateral concern, including debts and marriage cases.’⁹⁴

Before Wilson reached Romania, the British press questioned the results of such a visit when it came to free movement of people.⁹⁵

. . . Wilson on his forthcoming visit will presumably press for the release of four men, even five. The fate of her four people was seen by Thatcher as a test case of how Romania will carry out the Helsinki agreements. It is hard to see how the release of four, eight or even nine fortunate people, however welcome in itself, could test anything much.⁹⁶

Apparently Margaret Thatcher used a 1975 visit to Bucharest to press successfully for the release of four dissidents, as the *Daily Telegraph* claimed. Before her visit, Thatcher had been reminded that her hosts were engaged in a ruthless campaign, not for free movement of ideas, but to subordinate all cultural and artistic activity to party ideology, and to eliminate from the creative life all writers and artists who did not directly serve this end. She might have found candour from the men in power, but she was dealing with doctrinaire communists, and these she could not abide. ‘We need not presumably expect to find in Romanian literature or journalism much of that openness and candour which Thatcher apparently found in discussions with her host’, even the safely Tory *Daily Telegraph* editorialized.’⁹⁷

Indeed, following Ceausescu’s announcement in July 1971 of the ‘cultural revolution’ the party was ordered to take direct control of cultural policy. The right of the state to interfere with artists and writers was clearly stated. ‘It was admitted that, in part, the new cultural policy was designed to reassure the Soviet Union by demonstrating

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2750, f. 12, Telegram, Petersen, Bucharest, to FCO, 6 June 1975.

⁹⁵ Representations were frequently necessary to support applications for travel documents in favour of Romanians to visit or join relatives in Britain and concerning delays in allowing British and Romanian nationals to marry. Commenting on the result of Margaret Thatcher’s visit to Ceausescu, the *Daily Telegraph* could only mention that she secured the arrival to Britain of four people.

⁹⁶ ‘Blue Pencils in Bucharest,’ *Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1975.

⁹⁷ Cultural and artistic magazines, never unduly independent, were being cut in size and transformed into party political rags. Publishing houses, reviews, critics, readers, are all blasted for preferring what is ‘wrong’ or ‘confused’ to what is ‘right’. ‘Blue Pencils in Bucharest,’ *Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1975.

continuing vigilance and orthodoxy,' the Director General of the British Council asserted in his report following his visit to Romania at the end of September 1971.⁹⁸

While Thatcher praised the regime's openness to the external world, internally, if anything, greater controls were in place. Despite the openness claimed by Ceausescu no other Warsaw Pact state member had such harsh rules for travel outside its frontiers. Romania regarded emigration not as a civil right but as a concession granted to a limited number of individuals, mainly on the grounds of family reunification or following significant foreign pressure and even then only when a suitable quid pro quo had been identified. In order to keep the number of emigrants as low as possible, the regime erected a series of politically motivated, bureaucratic and financial burdens. In principle citizens had the choice of applying for emigration as a Romanian citizen wishing to take up residence abroad (blue passport) or for an emigration that entailed renouncing one's Romanian citizenship (brown passport). In practice the latter entailed the loss of one's legal, social and economic rights as a citizen. Once the application had been filled, the applicant lost his or her existing job and was transferred to manual work.⁹⁹

It appears, however, to have been external perceptions which mattered. The *Telegraph* might chide, but the Wilson Government concluded that '[a]lthough Romania was a communist country it sought to increase and diversify its contacts with all other countries'. There were reasons to believe that the new policy would lead to 'a freer flow of people, information and ideas between Romania and the outside world'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ TNA, PRO, BW 1/597, GEN 310/295, John Henniker to Sir Gilbert Longden, MBE, MP, 19 January 1972, British Council, Director General's report on his visit to Romania, 26 September-1 October 1971.

⁹⁹ Anneli Ute Gabany, *The Ceausescu Cult. Propaganda and Power Policy in Communist Romania*, The Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 417-20.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/635.

Generally speaking, 1975 was an excellent year for British-Romanian relations with a highly successful exchange of visits between the Prime Minister Wilson and President Ceausescu providing top cover for many useful governmental and commercial contacts. Commercial relations benefited from the warmth of political climate. The mainspring of Romanian policy continued to be the consolidation of a rigid but recognisably national brand of Communist orthodoxy at home, in firm control of a nation growing economically and in international presence. There was however a quest of for latitude in the scope and handling foreign affairs.

Britain's interests in Ceausescu's Romania

‘For many years the regime contrived to pursue at the same time the most flexible foreign policy and the most stifling internal regime within the Warsaw Pact.’ (FO Minute I.J.M. Sutherland)¹

‘Britain's relations with Romania would be deeper and more substantial than with some of the Socialist countries.’ (James Callaghan)²

There was an obvious and striking dichotomy between Ceausescu's quasi Stalinist internal policies and his ‘eclectic search for foreign friends and influence, in which ideology appeared as only a marginal consideration,’ the British Ambassador Petersen noted.³ The face the regime showed abroad was not at all what looked down at common Romanians. For the British as for other Western leaders it was a matter of ‘continuing puzzlement that the internal constraints are so severe’ while Romania's external policies displayed a considerable measure of independence, and while the regime leaned as far toward the West as was possible. ‘For many years the regime contrived to pursue at the same time the most flexible foreign policy and the most stifling internal regime within the Warsaw Pact.’⁴ This was called by the British an ‘idiosyncratic brand of communism’⁵

By the end of 1977 Ceausescu was at the peak of his power. He had achieved a measure of success in three important respects: consolidating the independence of the state and the sovereignty of the Romanian Communist Party, reconciling his policies of

¹ FCO 28/3084, f. 6, FO Minute I.J.M. Sutherland, 14 February 1977.

² 16/1838. From the Private Secretary, 16 June 1978, The Prime Minister's Discussions with President Ceausescu of Romania on 14 and 15 June 1978.

³ FCO 28/2911, ENR 014/1, J.C. Petersen, British Embassy Bucharest, to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Annual Review for Romania, 1 January 1976, f. 1.

⁴ FCO 28/3084, f. 6, FO Minute I.J.M. Sutherland, 14 February 1977.

⁵ FCO 28/3084, f. 6, B.G. Cartledge to Lord Goronwy-Roberts, 7 February 1977.

developing contacts with the West and the Third World with the immediate requirements of alliance with the Soviet Union; and in weathering the effects of the world economic recession. He had managed to do all of these things both while increasing his apparent domestic popularity, and without loosening the Party's stranglehold on national life. Ceausescu remained a 'complete' dictator, but he was also shrewd and playing a very complicated game. By courting Romanian nationalism he secured a measure of popular support which enabled him to maintain himself and his regime in power without Russian assistance. The illiberal nature of the regime in turn served the purpose of showing the Soviet Union that he was not a Dubcek and helped to allay misgivings about his overtures to Russia's enemies.⁶

By this juncture, Romania's relative independence was remarkable, and certainly unique in the Eastern Bloc. Ceausescu was still given wide credit internationally for having condemned the Soviet led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and for his continuing assertion of Romania's political independence. He had had cordial relations with China, Yugoslavia and other 'renegades'. He cultivated warm relations with the West and the European Community. He took an irritatingly independent and non-conformist line at international Communist Party meetings. All these intrigued the British Ambassadors.

Are Ceausescu's international activities designed mainly to protect his country against Big Brother Russia or are they a means of keeping himself in power? Is he basically a patriot or is he seeking, in traditional Romanian fashion, to found a new dynasty? With his personal style of living and the way in which he is settling his family in positions of power, there is some evidence for the latter thought.⁷

Britain was increasingly intrigued by the possibility of 'exploiting Romania's independent attitude within the Eastern Bloc, although there was no chance of our persuading Ceausescu to 'stray widely and become a Tito.' 'Yet it occurs to me,' the

⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report No. 149/77. Bucharest, 7 March 1977. First impressions on Romania.

⁷ Ibid.

British Ambassador believed, that we should perhaps try from time to time to turn to our advantage Romania's readiness to twist the tails of her Warsaw Pact allies: there could be opportunities at the forthcoming CSCE Review Conference in Belgrade. The process would be assisted if we could offer, in exchange, the occasional titbit not give to the other Eastern Europeans.⁸

Arriving in Bucharest at the beginning of 1977, the new British Ambassador, Reginald Seconde, was struck by the 'depressing air' of Bucharest,

there is something depressing about it which is hard to define. It is not entirely the monumental heaviness of the new buildings or the glimpses one gets of the tattered finery of the past or the wide acres of identical blocks of workers' flats – or even the pathetic displays of consumer goods in the shops (all State-owned). I think it is rather in the look of the people.⁹

Seconde would soon find out that a 'pervading State control' affected the daily lives of 'the humblest citizens'. Even Party activists were looking over their shoulders since someone belonging to security apparatus 'could be there to control'. 'Living here, one is too conscious of the numbing influence of a one-man directed Communism which flows through every vein of society and every branch of activity.' The simple freedoms of being able to air their views, to do what they want with their lives or to leave the country when they wish, did not exist. 'Everything and everybody must conform to the wishes of the all-powerful Party and State, in which President Ceausescu is the deity.'¹⁰

The Ceausescu regime was aware that significant cognitive dissonance was apt to be produced when foreigners compared what they were told by the regime with what they could see for themselves. Part of the answer remained to restrict contact between

⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report No. 149/77. Bucharest, 7 March 1977. First impressions on Romania.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Romanians and foreigners. The regime did what it could to insulate Romanians from foreigners in general and diplomats in particular.¹¹

Meanwhile the Securitate was publically urged to concentrate more on the threat from outside, specifically from foreign agents since the actual power of any domestic opposition was judged to be small.¹² However, British diplomats believed that the primary focus of the organization remained a potential internal threat. They considered that the regime was using the excuse provided by a supposed outside threat to justify the intrusive activities and large size of the Securitate. As well, to work efficiently the Securitate needed to be able to count upon the active collaboration of working people. Spies were a more satisfying enemy, for this constituency, than dissidents. In the spring of 1973, Ceausescu decided that Party control over the Ministry of Interior had to be tightened up. He arranged for direct Party supervision of State Security. Ceausescu reminded those who might have forgotten that ‘the whole activity of the Securitate and Militia bodies, of the other units in the Ministry of Home Affairs, are part of the activity carried on by our Party and State, by our entire people.’¹³ The abuses committed by the Securitate and the Militia in the past were to be checked by the Party. The Securitate, he promised, would be made to observe the laws.

Measures must be taken against all those who transgressed laws or deviate from the norms of social cohabitation, who under one form or another damage socialist property, harm the property of citizens in one way or another, prejudice socialist construction, the consolidation of our State. But with the same firmness we must permit nobody –starting of course with the bodies of the Ministry of Home Affairs – any kind of abuses! Socialist legality has to work two ways and in full unity –

¹¹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 1. “Ceausescu and the Securitate,” British Embassy Bucharest, 12 January 1977, M.W. Shaw to M.F. Sullivan, EESD.

¹² Although it was rare for a dictator publicly to criticise one of the major instruments of his own control, Ceausescu might have been doing it for certain reasons, the British believed. He might well have been motivated by: the need to keep the powerful internal body, the Securitate, in its place by periodic doses of magisterial displeasure; his ‘war’ against corruption and abuse in general, a sensitive point for public opinion. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 1. “Ceausescu and the Securitate,” British Embassy Bucharest, M.W. Shaw to M.F. Sullivan, EESD, 12 January 1977.

¹³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 1. “Ceausescu and the Securitate,” British Embassy Bucharest, 12 January 1977, M.W. Shaw to M.F. Sullivan, EESD. Ceausescu’s speech delivered on 23 December 1976 to the higher echelons of the Ministry of the Interior. (published in full the next day in *Scanteia*).

not to leave anybody unpunished who transgresses laws and not to permit that somebody be punished unjustly. Only in this way shall we make our society assert itself as the justness and most humane society in the world.’¹⁴

The mood of the people might be best described as vigilant *attentisme*. ‘Convinced ideological belief is rare, but blasphemy is a serious offence,’ the British Ambassador noted in 1977. Nepotism and networking produced whatever actual dynamism the regime possessed. Within the political structures networks of personal friendship and allegiance were ‘a vital element’. Connections were the only guarantee of respect of the forces of officialdom and minor authority. The security of possessions and individual rights were to a large extent dependent on having friends in high places.¹⁵

The symbols of privilege conferred for status in Party and Government were obvious and impressive: villas, Mercedes cars, and exclusive access to luxury consumer goods. So complete was the association of wealth with political power, that signs of prosperity provided immunity from the sort of petty harassment endemic, and unavoidable for the rest of the population. A man in country clothes driving an old Moskvitch would be stopped by the Militia half a dozen times on various pretexts, even in the course of a short trip. Meanwhile, the driver of a black Mercedes sedan would sweep through every checkpoint unmolested. Even a new Dacia (the Romanian version of the Renault 12) commanded some respect as being likely to betoken the existence of friends in high places.¹⁶ ‘*Nomenklatura* could be recognized through the privileges they enjoyed. Its members and their families ‘never take the bus or tram. They used the government’s cars whose colour and the model indicated the owner’s status within hierarchy; the darker the

¹⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 1. “Ceausescu and the Securitate,” British Embassy Bucharest, 12 January 1977, M.W. Shaw to M.F. Sullivan, EESD, FO. Ceausescu’s speech delivered on 23 December 1976 to the higher echelons of the Ministry of the Interior. (published in full the next day in *Scanteia*).

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Jeffrey Petersen, Bucharest, to Anthony Crosland, MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 13 January 1977, Valedictory from Bucharest.

¹⁶ Ibid.

colour, the higher the status.’¹⁷ Ceausescu himself justified the striking differentials in prosperity and position existing in what still claimed to be a committed socialist society.

‘In the context of the division of labour,’ he assessed,

‘there exist in our society various social and professional categories who have their place and their importance, and working people are paid in conformity with the provisions of laws, with those which, at any given moment, are considered to correspond to the possibilities of society as well as to the importance of one sector or another. Certainly, the relative positions of the various categories are not fixed for all time; it may be that, during one Five Year Plan, one branch has a more important place in response to the technical requirements of development and, in another Five Year Plan, another one comes to the fore, whilst the others stay in their place.’¹⁸

The *nomenklatura* presided over a society, rigidly hierarchical and thoroughly bureaucratic to its narrow. Every bureaucratic act had to be justified by superior orders, preferably incorporated in a document. ‘In the conduct of Romanian Foreign Policy, the passion for signing protocols, agreements and communiqués stemmed from this in part. Ratified by the State Council or its appendages, all these documents became passports for action, tickets to ride. Without them there was no quotable authority for, or even legality of action.’ At the apex of the pyramid sat the President whose words were to all intents and purposes absolute laws. A summon from the President had to be instantly obeyed. Ministers were expected to be on call. ‘As soon as the President announced his first piece of business and sent for the responsible Minister word went quickly around the secretarial network and everyone else relaxed. Everything is dropped to concentrate on any task indicated by President Ceausescu.’ The 14-hour days worked by the heads of major

¹⁷ Ion Mihai Pacepa, *orizonturi rosii. Crimele, coruptia si mostenirea Ceausestilor [Red Horizons. The True Story of Nicolae Ceausescu's Crimes, Lifestyle and Corruption]*, Bucharest, 2010, p. 236.

¹⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 4. British Embassy, Bucharest, 23 February 1977, M.W. Shaw to M.F. Sullivan, EESD, FCO.

departments were attributable to the exhausting and time consuming requirement that they avoid or shift responsibility for all decisions.¹⁹

The regime was also characterised by love of ritual, perhaps as demonstration of power. Important foreign visits could lead to near paralysis while they continued.

When the President received a Head of State or Government the entire hierarchy goes to the airport for the arrival and departure ceremonies and may spend the better part of half a day mustered around the walls of a hall in the State Palace simply decorating the occasion. When Sir Harold Wilson, as Prime Minister, signed the agreed documents at the end of his visit in September 1975 virtually every senior Minister and Party official stood about with the Prime Minister's party doing nothing for well over two hours.²⁰

Ministers and senior Party officials spent an inordinate amount of time on purely ceremonial activities. Much time was dedicated to mere attendance at ceremonial functions. 'Hence the odd impression that one sometimes gets that the entire senior staff of a particular Ministry bent on a single job to the apparent exclusion of everything else including its continuing responsibilities in other directions; and even on answering the telephone.'²¹

Although the existing differentials within society were not denied, Ceausescu used to point out in his speeches the need to raise living standards, 'material and spiritual,' of the people generally. The slow improvement of conditions of life in Romania was attributed to the exceptional high rate of capital investment.²² If conditions remained poor today, then that was because a much better tomorrow was being prepared. The real reason,

¹⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report, No. 131/77, Despatch from the British Ambassador at Bucharest, Jeffrey Petersen, to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. 13 January 1977. Valedictory from Bucharest.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² 'Though, things have been getting better over the last few months, and were perceived to be doing so by ordinary Romanians.' TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 4. British Embassy, Bucharest, 23 February 1977, M.W. Shaw to M.F. Sullivan, EESD, FCO. Ceausescu's speech to conference of working men's control units.

British diplomats assessed, was inefficiency and particularly corruption which remained an important part of people's life. Corruption was 'universal' and large amounts of cash 'swill about in the system and find their way illegally abroad'. 'I suspect that the large amounts of Romanian currency which find their way to exchange banks in neighbouring countries for sale at a heavy discount to tourists and others are simply carted out in the briefcases of travelling officials who otherwise can take abroad only an exiguous daily dollar allowance for current needs. Fear of the consequences of too much money openly chasing too few goods may well lie behind the draconian restrictions on all private trading including that in second-hand goods', the British Ambassador Petersen asserted in his report to London.²³

If, by the middle 1970s, Romania had adopted the domestic configuration it would have until the end of the regime, it had also assumed the Foreign Policy it would continue to follow while Ceausescu endured. There would be no radical departure from the already established lines of Romanian foreign policy henceforth. Ceausescu's talks concerning foreign affairs usually contained 'the well-established litany of Romania's principles of foreign policy'. During the preparation for the East Berlin Conference of Communist Parties the Romanians together with the Yugoslavs and the Western Communist Parties succeeded in extracting from Moscow recognition, in theory at least, of the right of each Communist Party and country to determine its own policies in the light of its own national experience. At the same time, the Romanians seemed to have accepted the need to balance this recognition with a readiness to move towards the restoration of stable bilateral relations with the Russians and to the reaffirmation of their loyalty to the Warsaw Pact.²⁴

Surface relations with the Soviet Union remained cool but correct, even though in a three-hour speech, on 18 December 1975, during which he reviewed major foreign

²³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Jeffrey Petersen, Bucharest, to Anthony Crosland, MP, 13 January 1977, Valedictory from Bucharest.

²⁴ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3075, f. 33, Romanian Ambassador's dinner for the PUS, 18 May 1977. Paper produced by the Eastern European Experts' Working group of the Nine on 'The situation in Romania' (annex D).

policy, Ceausescu failed to mention the Soviet Union by name once. When attending meetings of the Eastern Bloc, Romanians delegates were briefed to assume a predominantly defensive role. Warsaw Pact contacts remained cool although one staff exercise and a meeting of the Military Council of the Pact took place in Romania during Ceausescu's reign. Romania's lack of enthusiasm did not go unnoticed. The Romanian Government later came under fire at the annual Ministerial meeting of the Pact in November 1976 for its reluctance to meet its share of the organisation's cost, its too evident lack of enthusiasm for Warsaw Pact activities and for its insistence on treating each request for movement of Warsaw Pact personnel across Romanian territory as a separate issue to be negotiated laboriously from scratch.²⁵

The necessary formal submissions, however, continued to be offered. Toward the end of 1976, for example, a common declaration was signed in Bucharest to mark the first visit of Brezhnev to Bucharest in a decade. In his speech at the welcoming banquet on 22 November 1976, Ceausescu assessed that 'some differences of opinion on non-essential questions should not affect collaboration between our parties and states.' Brezhnev, in his reply, remarked, 'there are no important unsolved problems between our countries.'²⁶

The Romanians used diplomacy to defuse apparent differences with other Warsaw Pact allies.²⁷ Inter-Pact relations improved in 1977 as testified by a series of high level exchanges and a substantial array of bilateral documents signed.²⁸ Although the Western

²⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2911, ENR 014/1, J.C. Petersen, British Embassy Bucharest, to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Annual Review for Romania, 1 January 1976, f. 1.

²⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3808, f.2, 9 January 1979. J. R. Banks, East European Section, Research Department, to N.E. Sheinwald, Moscow, on Romanian-Soviet disputes. Copies to D.A. Macleod (Bucharest) si Lambert, EESD.

²⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 16. R.A. Burns, British Embassy Bucharest, to J.H. Figgis, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 27 April 1977.

²⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to David Owen, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, MP, 15 August 1977.

leaders understood that there were limits within which the Romanians operated,²⁹ the independent and nonconformist line seemed muted since Brezhnev's visit to Bucharest and the Warsaw Pact meeting in November 1976.³⁰

Since last autumn the cracking pace which the President sets in every field of national and international activity has been noticeably directed towards fence-mending with his partners and neighbours. He exchanged an impressive series of visits with the Russians, the Poles, the East Germans and the Czechs while Bulgaria is to be added to the list next month. He also met Kadar on the border and had more constructive relations with the Hungarians than have been seen for many a year.³¹

The tempo of working-level visits on subjects ranging from economics to ideology with the Soviet Union increased dramatically about the same time, although Romania refused to reopen issues already settled to its satisfaction.³² While they continued to remain alive to issues of national sovereignty in CMEA, the Romanians agreed that their country, as a lesser developed member of the CMEA, could anticipate greater economic benefits from CMEA coordination.³³ Part of the reason for Romania's movement back toward the Soviet Union may have been disappointment at the unwillingness of the West and the EEC to recognise Romania as a developing country and to grant it the economic concessions commensurate with such status. If this was the case, disappointment did not prevent the Romanians from attempting continually to improve relations with the West and the European Economic Community in particular. The perceived desire remained to pursue

²⁹ In particular, the seditious activities towards the Warsaw Pact had not to be carried to a point where the Soviet leadership would be forced actively to object. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, Romania's approach to Euro-Communism and Detente.

³⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, f. 20. B.G. Cartledge to R.L. Seconde, 25 March 1977.

³¹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to David Owen, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. MP, 15 August 1977.

³² Ibid.

³³ Paper produced by the Eastern European Experts' Working group of the Nine on 'The situation in Romania' (annex D), 18 May 1977. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3075, f. 33.

economic benefit while extracting maximum advantage from the unique position Romania had assumed between Eastern and Western Europe.³⁴

The Ceausescu regime remained attentive to signs of favour. The British Ambassador was repeatedly told of 'Romania's hurt feelings because the European Community generally, and Britain in particular, seem unappreciative of Romania's special position in the Bloc.'³⁵ London considered that perhaps the Romanians had a right to feel aggrieved. It was in the West's and particularly Britain's interest 'to give further encouragement to Romanian efforts to follow an independent path in foreign affairs, particularly in the context of detente, at the CSCE, in the UN and in the deliberations of the Warsaw Pact,' the Foreign and Commonwealth Office maintained³⁶ What Britain hoped to achieve was 'the maximum benefit from information which Romania can provide on developments in the world communist movement,' seemingly fracturing with some help from Bucharest.³⁷

By diminishing its dependence on the Soviet Union and developing closer political, economic and commercial contacts with the West, Romania produced difficulties within the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact and provided opportunities for Britain and the West generally. Romania's contacts with the EEC, its distinctive stand at the CSCE and its independent role at the United Nations had been helpful to the West.³⁸ Romania has achieved considerable success in pursuing an independent and flexible foreign policy

³⁴ Figures available for 1975 show that 45% of Romania's external trade was with its CMEA partners, 37% with the developed West and the remainder with the developing countries. Romanian Ambassador's dinner for the PUS, 18 May 1977. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3075, f. 33.

³⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report No. 149/77. Bucharest, 7 March 1977. First impressions on Romania.

³⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410. Country assessment paper: Romania, SECTION IV, 13 July 1978.

³⁷ B. L. Crowe to Scott, EESD, on British Interests, Political, paragraph 4 had been annotated as follows: 'It is in Britain's interest that Romania should continue her independent policy, diminishing her dependence on the Soviet Union and developing closer political, economic and commercial contact with the west.' TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Note of 14 July 1978, p. 26, Country Assessment Sheet, Romania, section II. Paragraph 4 (i) first sentence.

³⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet: Romania. Draft 3 July 1978. Section II. British interests in Romania.

based on the territorial integrity of the state while maintaining internally the strictest communist regime in Eastern Europe.³⁹

Britain could not exert any beneficial influence on human rights issue without damaging more important interests. Although certain efforts were made to meet Western criticism, Romania's application of the Helsinki Basket three provisions had been far from satisfactory.⁴⁰ When it came to the commitments to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and to promote the principles of democracy, Romania obvious failed. 'We must chip away, but I doubt whether we shall have any spectacular results,' the British Ambassador Seconde concluded.⁴¹ Encouraging the Romanian regime to introduce a greater measure of individual freedom internally was important in as much as it could facilitate easier human contacts and allow British consular officials to deal promptly with bilateral cases concerning British nationals. Representations were frequently necessary to support applications for travel documents in favour of Romanians to visit or join relatives in Britain and concerning delays in allowing British and Romanian nationals to marry.⁴²

Even on these minor issues, however, Ceausescu would not budge. When the British Ambassador Petersen argued for a better mutual understanding which would have allow practical problems such as marriage cases, and visa problems to be solved,⁴³ the

³⁹ The paragraph referring to Ro as 'the strictest regime in EE' was eventually deleted since it was a debatable point whether Romania or Czechoslovakia -- or even the GDR for that matter -- had 'the strictest Communist regime in Eastern Europe.' It would be better to say one of the strictest Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Note of 14 July 1978, p. 26, Country Assessment Sheet, Romania, section II. Paragraph 4 (i) first sentence. The draft was amended.

⁴⁰ The Helsinki Final Act which was signed by thirty-three heads of state or government encompassed three main sets of recommendations, often referred to as 'baskets'. While the firsts two 'baskets' referred to questions relating to security in Europe, cooperation in the field of economics, of science, technology and environment, the third 'basket' referred mainly to cooperation in humanitarian field.

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report No. 149/77. Bucharest, 7 March 1977. First impressions on Romania.

⁴² Members of Parliament had often become involved in personal cases. 'Increasing number of British tourists visit Romania, individually and in package tours with a correspondent increase in the number of consular problems. . . . [T]hese increased contacts also have implications for the number of human rights cases handled by the FCO'. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet: Romania. Draft 3 July 1978.

⁴³ The refusal of exit visas for Embassy staff was an example of a real hindrance to, if not actual harassment of, the operation of the British Embassy. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/308. Record of farewell call by the

Romanians replied that many of the difficulties which arose over humanitarian problems stemmed from the Herculean efforts to modernise the economy. Before developing a 'really constructive and mutually beneficial free interchange of people and cultural ideas' the Romanians had to create a better economic and social environment within the country. The cost in financial, material and human terms was high and 'the West should be more patient'.⁴⁴

In 1977 the Romanian press suddenly acquired a strident anti-Western tone, directed at the internal readership, even while Ceausescu aimed to improve relations abroad. This was the more striking since Romanian newspapers were usually appallingly dull in their reporting, and strictly predictable in their editorial content.⁴⁵ There was an intensive press campaign containing stories about the nastiness of life in the United States and Western Europe, polemical pieces about the fate of emigrants to Germany, about unemployment, drugs, racism and violence, about neo-Fascism and the miseries of immigrant workers, the iniquities of Radio Free Europe propaganda and the Western press for their accusations on the quality of life in Romania. Ceausescu himself spoke angrily about the 'seduction' of citizens and the activities carried on in 'certain countries' to encourage the Romanian citizens to emigrate which he described as a grave interference in Romania's internal affairs. These acts constituted hostile acts against Romania, Ceausescu maintained.⁴⁶ However he did allow a distinction between the issues of integrating families

British Ambassador in Bucharest, J.C. Petersen, on the Head of Directorate III at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iuliu Dobroiu, 10 January 1977.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ The two newspapers which appeared in Bucharest were 'utterly dreary, with no capitalist advertisements even to enliven them. They record in unvarying clichés the serious, nonstop activities of President Ceausescu, the achievements of the regime (with plenty of statistics) and the unhappy state of the vice-ridden, Western world.' TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to David Owen, MP, 15 August 1977.

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 14. R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to B.G. Cartledge, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 13 April 1977, Anti-Westernism and Anti-Emigration in Romania.

towards which he showed understanding as 'justified cases'⁴⁷ and emigration of which he strongly disapproved.⁴⁸

The press campaign seemingly had the purpose of intimidating the Romanians who wanted to leave the country. Ceausescu's strictures against those who wished to emigrate and those in foreign countries who enticed Romanians 'to forsake their native land' followed the Romanian doctrine that each state has the right to pursue its own policies and to control its own resources, including the vital one of manpower.⁴⁹

If the tactic of encouraging people to despise and fear the West and to value more highly the benefits of life in Romania did not have a serious impact on Romanian thinking, more serious were the decrees clamping down markedly upon the freedom of contacting the foreign Embassies. Two decrees signed by Ceausescu on 29 March concerning state secrets and the employment of Romanians by foreign Embassies and firms were implemented but not published.⁵⁰ Increased restriction on foreign travel and on contacts with foreigners reached an unprecedented level following the re-promulgation of the 1971 Law of State Secrets. Certain kinds of contact with foreigners were punished by fines and Romanian officials were again required to obtain advance permission to consort with foreigners socially. Thereafter they were required to report on conversations.⁵¹ Journalists in particular were under strong instructions to stop gossiping with Westerners.

⁴⁷ According to the Americans, Romanians were making efforts to settle all outstanding marriage and family reunification cases. The Americans received 342 approvals. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, NATO deputies meeting, 3 February 1977, T. A. Burns to M. Shaw.

⁴⁸ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 8, Martin Shaw, British Embassy Bucharest, to Michael Sullivan, EESD, FCO, 30 March 1977.

⁴⁹ 'Romania does have a serious problem over the number of would-be emigrants, since these include a significant proportion of skilled workers. Ceausescu probably believes that he could defend himself at Belgrade by arguing that their expertise is essential after the catastrophe of the earthquake. And he no doubt believes he could take advantage of the apparent surge of national unity in the earthquake's immediate aftermath to appeal to the patriotic instincts of ordinary Romanians.' TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 19. B.G. Cartledge, EESD, FCO to R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, 13 May 1977, Anti-Westernism and Anti-Emigration in Romania.

⁵⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 14. R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to B.G. Cartledge, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 13 April 1977, Anti-Westernism and Anti-Emigration in Romania.

⁵¹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2911, ENR 014/1, J.C. Petersen, British Embassy Bucharest, to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Annual Review for Romania, 1 January 1976, f. 1.

They particularly feared that anything they might say would be used against them once the state secrets decree was promulgated.⁵²

In addition, under the new dispensation, all visa applications had to be routed through official channels. Both the British and the French Embassy were told that all applications would in future be dealt through the Romanian Tourist Agency rather than applicants coming directly to Embassies. Romanians who violated the new regulations by attempting to visit the United States Embassy were arrested and interrogated, as were visitors to the West Germany Embassy. Not surprisingly, a sharp reduction in visa applications followed. To facilitate detection, taxi drivers were instructed to set down their passengers fifty yards short of the British Chancery entrance. Notwithstanding official discouragement, some students continued to go to the British and US libraries.⁵³ If the regime could discourage contact with foreigners, it retained the power to prohibit and persecute. Few were as brave as the few students who refused to submit.

Real persecution followed. On 1 April 1977 the dissident Paul Goma was arrested and a press campaign started against him. Ion Negoitescu, one of Goma's allies, was arrested and interrogated one week later. Baptist leaders were released after being arrested for their denunciation of religious persecution but had to report to Securitate each day. A Belgrade correspondent of the *New York Times*, Malcolm Brown, was refused entry into Romania.⁵⁴

⁵² I have been just totally unable to obtain any Romanian journalists to come to lunch with David Lascalles of the *Financial Times*. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 14. R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to B.G. Cartledge, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 13 April 1977, Anti-Westernism and Anti-Emigration in Romania.

⁵³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 15. R.A. Burns, British Embassy Bucharest, to J.H. Figgis, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 20 April 1977, Anti Westernism and Anti-Emigration in Romania.

⁵⁴ Chronology (supplements previous list attached to letter of 13 April to Cartledge (EESD). TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 15. R.A. Burns, British Embassy Bucharest, to J.H. Figgis, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 20 April 1977.

The British speculated about the reason for the anti-foreign and anti-West campaign. The Foreign Office assessed that a combination of factors was in play.⁵⁵ Motives behind the change of atmosphere could have implied the need to prevent a mass exodus of the German minority, anger against Radio Free Europe, President Carter's announcement of increased funds for Radio Free Europe, or more probably perception of the grumbles of discontent emerging from the population. It could have been a little of all of these things, and it is difficult to be certain political motivations in a regime as total and personal as Ceausescu's.

On the whole, the British ambassador believed, it looked as if the campaign were primarily attended to scotch at the outset any potential emigration movement from Romania, following from the establishment of freer education as an item on the human rights agenda, slated for discussion at the upcoming conference in Belgrade.⁵⁶ Polemics were building a new situation of bloc to bloc confrontation. The Romanians were worried by the hardening in East-West relations generally and the implicit American assumption that Romania would naturally fall into the Soviet sphere of influence. 'Perhaps, once again they fear that President Carter's attitude will have the effect of polarising East-West relations and making it more difficult for Romania to maintain her middle position.'⁵⁷

Revising estimates of what might be possible, given the sudden coolness, the principal task of Britain's Embassy in Bucharest was re-established as the encouragement of British-Romanian commerce and especially export promotion.⁵⁸ 'We already have a healthy trade turnover of about 100 million pounds a year but the potential is much greater'

⁵⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 19. B.G. Cartledge, EESD, FCO to R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, 13 May 1977.

⁵⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 14. R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to B.G. Cartledge, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 13 April 1977.

⁵⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 16. R.A. Burns, British Embassy Bucharest, to J. H. Figgis, Eastern European & Soviet Department, FCO, 27 April 1977.

⁵⁸ Section V. Means in support of objectives. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet: Romania. Draft 3 July 1978.

the FCO considered.⁵⁹ There were excellent trade opportunities which the British were determined to pursue despite the ‘tiresome Romanian negotiating attitudes’.⁶⁰

The in-coming British Ambassador did not dissent from the reduction of the scope of his mandate. He believed that the Romania’s economy was ‘pretty soundly based.’ ‘If success is judged by purely economic results, then, despite the creaks and groans in machinery, the Romanians have been very successful indeed – and this faces us with important and challenging commercial task. Following classic Marxist doctrines, the Romanian government put all their economic effort into production and the encouragement of heavy industry. To this end the Romanian worker toils away at the Plan for a long working week, while the Romanian consumer goes without luxuries and much of what in the West would be regarded as necessities.’⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Romanian drive for extensive industrialization presented many opportunities for an increase of exports (particularly in the capital goods, metallurgy and chemical sectors). Romania’s desire to pay for foreign purchases through barter caused certain difficulties.⁶² Any deterioration in its foreign currency position could lead to increased economic dependence on CMEA and

⁵⁹ Joint Commission machinery was an important tool of export promotion and the East Europe Trade Council also played a valuable role. British exports to Romania in 1977 totalled 80.6 million pounds (0.25% of the UK total), an increase from the previous year of 65%. British exports increased because of special factors. The British financial commitment to the growth of Romanian aircraft industry was growing, following the negotiations of contracts with British Aerospace and Rolls Royce. The British share of total Romanian imports in 1976 was 2.72%. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet. Draft 3 July 1978.

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report No. 149/77. Romania, 7 March 1977. First impressions on Romania. Summary.

⁶¹ Although the industrial growth rate has averaged nearly 13 per cent, over 30 per cent of each year’s GNP was ploughed back into supporting new industries and buying technology in the nuclear, aircraft construction and other modern industrial fields. ‘The targets sets may be sometimes over ambitious but Romania’s economy is pretty soundly based’. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Diplomatic Report No. 149/77. Bucharest, 7 March 1977. First impressions.

⁶² “Willingness to consider some form of industrial collaboration is of growing importance to British companies wishing to export to Romania.” Romania’s planned industrial expansion provides British industry with continuing commercial opportunities. Specific opportunities to further British interests centre upon ministerial visits. Ceausescu’s visit provided increased commercial opportunities. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet: Romania. Draft 3 July 1978.

slow down the drive towards industrial development, from which, of course, benefit to the UK could be anticipated.⁶³

Although ‘anxious to buy just the kind of things which Britain is best qualified to sell,’ exporting to Romania was not easy. Romania represented an attractive growth opportunity not only for the British exporters but also for other Western countries and this led to a sharp commercial competition. The Romanians, renowned for being ‘intolerable negotiators,’ attempted to play one off against the other. They used as in their political dealings ‘every wile and devious trick’; they were ‘shameless hagglers’ who encouraged all comers from Western and Eastern Europe in order to play off one against the other and they exploited the slightest loophole in a contract. What the British traders had to do was to ‘adjust themselves to Romanian methods.’⁶⁴

There was a steady improvement in bilateral relations after the announcement in October 1977 of Ceausescu’s state visit to Britain.⁶⁵ From the British perspective, Romania’s interest in Britain was mainly political. The Romanians attached great importance to expanding their relations with the West, in order to obtain support and credibility for their independent policies. Britain had become a target because of its influence within the EEC, NATO and the UN Security Council on matters of trade, disarmament and the continued progress of *détente*. Fairly frequent visits by Ministers (three or four a year) in both directions were highly valued by the Romanians as demonstrating the continued commitment of the British Government to the maintenance of good relations.

⁶³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet: Romania. Draft 3 July 1978.

⁶⁴ ‘I hope that Her Majesty Government will be able to continue suitable credit support for their efforts.’ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, ENR 400/548/2. Diplomatic Report No. 149/77. Bucharest, 7 March 1977. First impressions.

⁶⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, doc. 24: D. A. MacLeod to D.G. Lambert, British Embassy Bucharest, 4 July 1978.

The projected State visit of Ceausescu was especially valuable in this respect, the more-so because the Romanians appreciated Britain as an influential voice in the development of world economic and financial arrangements.⁶⁶ Although a member of the CMEA, by the latter 1970s Romania conducted less than half of its trade with Communist countries. Its economic strategy was to attain the level of medium developed countries by the mid-1980s and to build up an industrial base in metallurgy, engineering and the chemical industry.⁶⁷ The Romanians' hope for stronger and beneficial economic ties with Britain remained strong. One of the main interests focused on getting British advanced technology especially aircraft engines.

Ceausescu's distinctive style of foreign policy had given Romania a special position in the international community and secured for him a reputation as a world statesman. Ceausescu's Romania continued to be the least enthusiastic and effective member of the Warsaw Pact. Unlike the other members of the Pact, in addition to its contacts with the West and idiosyncratic position concerning the Sino-Soviet split, it made considerable effort to establish a special relationship with the non-aligned movement and maintains relations with both Israel and the Arab countries. In the world Communist movement the Romanians supported the principle of independence of the Communist Parties and deplored public polemics between parties.⁶⁸ Romania's friendly relations with Yugoslavia and China and the non-aligned movement were designed to bolster its position. The departure of Ceausescu might prejudice the Romanians' ability to continue their independent policies, the British believed.⁶⁹

The main threat to Romania's independence came from an over-mastering Soviet Union. The maintenance of friendly relations with Yugoslavia and China and the non-

⁶⁶ In 1977 Romania's exports to the UK were 52,5 million pounds (0,14 per cent of total UK imports). TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet: Romania. Draft 3 July 1978.

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, f. 60. Country Assessment Sheet: Romania, 11 May 1978.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3410, Country Assessment Sheet: Romania. Draft 3 July 1978.

aligned movement were designed in large measure to ameliorate this problem. Some of Romania's Warsaw Pact allies were also troublesome. Nevertheless, if some room for manoeuvre could be maintained, and if actual war were averted, some measure of independence would be possible, Britain's mission in Bucharest assessed:

Above all they fear the Russians. And their over-riding anxiety is to avoid giving the Soviet leaders an excuse for intervening in Romanian affairs, or still worse, for establishing control over the mouth of the Danube and thus obtaining a stranglehold over Romanian economic life.' As long as the American and Soviet commitments to detente and the avoidance of nuclear war constraints the two Super Powers' action, as long as the actions in the Middle East or elsewhere did not precipitate confrontation, the Romanians were reasonably sure that they could hold the line.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Ceausescu never forgot the Dubcek precedent; nor that the Romanian Party would not necessarily be the leader of choice for a Romania free to choose. These balls he juggled. The deliberate policy of normalising relations with its Warsaw Pact allies created a period of relative calm for pursuing Romania's national interests. Romania's interest in the maintenance of detente provided room for its economic development and to resist outside political interference. The Romanians remained obsessed by a fear of anything that might have increased the polarisation of Europe and hated, particularly, discussion of 'provocative' human rights policies. For this reason, the Government's policies, internal or external, were never allowed to harden into any easily defined geo-political concept or nationalist determination. The party as well was in no hurry to abandon the position of power and privilege it had assumed for itself.

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, R.L. Seconde, British Embassy Bucharest, to David Owen, Diplomatic report, 15 August 1977.

The Queen's Guests

‘There is no evidence that denial of human rights and break-neck forced industrialization are the price Ceausescu must pay to maintain country's independence.’ (Ion Ratiu)¹

An invitation to pay a State Visit does not, of course, imply approval of particular policies pursued by the Government of the visitor's country. But it does suggest the existence of shared interests, to which a State Visit would give impetus. (Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs)²

An invitation to come to London to President Ceausescu was issued by Harold Wilson during his visit to Bucharest in 1975 but the idea of such a visit was in fact first put forward earlier, in June 1973, during the Conservative administration, when Ceausescu was asked if he would like to come on Britain on either a State or a working visit.³ The Conservative Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Julian Amery, raised the idea in 1973. Ashe, the British Ambassador in Bucharest, on local leave in London until 15 October 1974, argued for the State visit by Ceausescu. ‘We had given the Romanians strong reason to believe that this would be possible at a not-too-distant date,’ he assessed, adding that ‘the British interests in Romania would suffer if we did not make good this promise’. He certainly had in mind political and commercial considerations.⁴ The delay was however caused by Ceausescu's refusal to accept anything else but a full state visit.⁵

¹ Letter of Ion Ratiu chairman of the British-Romanian association. *The Times*, 22 July 1978.

² TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 34, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to Eric Deakins, MP, House of Commons, 15 June 1978.

³ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2553, J. L. Bullard, East European & Soviet Department, to R.B. Dorman, British Embassy Bucharest, Visit of Andrei and Pungan to London 2-4 May; Brief for the PM's meeting with Stefan Andrei (Secretary of the Party responsible for Foreign Affairs) and Pungan; BW 53/23, f. 16. David Owen to Sir Derek Walker-Smith, MP, 12 May 1978.

⁴ ‘If Ceausescu was able to carry out a trouble-free visit to Australia and New Zealand, this might carry some weight with the Royal Visits Committee.’ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2547, f. 10. J.L. Bullard to Green, 3 October 1974.

⁵ Nicholas Carroll, ‘Ceausescu makes it to the palace at last,’ *Sunday Times*, 11 June 1978.

State visits had to be planned two or three years ahead, James Callaghan told Ceausescu during their short meeting in London in 1975. The Queen's Jubilee in 1977, when thirty-three Heads of Commonwealth countries were to be coming to London was a major preoccupation. Ceausescu replied that he did not wish to attach too much importance to the formality of State visits, as his own meeting with the Prime Minister that day showed. So far as a State visit was concerned he hoped that this could take place whenever possible, but there was no hurry about it, and he would be happy to wait for one, two or three years. He emphasized that he did not wish to create any precedents for other Heads of State.⁶ The British assured Ceausescu that they would make a formal announcement of the timing of the State visit. That should not however preclude him from coming to London on less formal visits meanwhile.⁷

In part the invitation was intended to recognise the special position of Romania as a Communist country with an independent foreign policy and one which, by maintaining good relations with countries of all political persuasions, had a unique contribution to make to the solution of international problems (the Middle East, for instance). It was also hoped that the visit would encourage closer commercial relations between the two countries and thereby increase the opportunities for British exporters in Romania.⁸ The Government's justification for inviting Ceausescu was that he alone in the Warsaw Pact bloc had consistently taken a foreign policy line independent of Moscow, and had therefore to be encouraged. He preached a policy of non-interference and he recognized Israel as well as the Arab states, China as well as the Soviet Union. It was

⁶ The meeting took place during Ceausescu's stopover in London on his way back to Romania. Record of the meeting between Ceausescu and Callaghan, 12 June 1975. TNA, PRO, FC0 28/2750, f. 47, B.G. Cartledge, EESD, FCO, to J. C. Petersen, C.M.G. Bucharest, 11 July 1975. Visit of President Ceausescu's visit to Britain.

⁷ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/637, Record of the meeting between the PM, James Callaghan, and President Ceausescu at Chequers, 12 June 1975.

⁸ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 16. David Owen, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to Sir Derek Walker-Smith, MP, 12 May 1978.

claimed that he persuaded President Sadat of Egypt to try to break the deadlock by offering to visit Israel.⁹

The details of the visit were subject of prolonged and difficult negotiation between the two sides. The Romanians insisted on having the State visit publicized internationally.¹⁰ The Romanians involved in the preparation of the visit required from the British that four officers responsible for Ceausescu's security be allowed to carry guns. The British Special Branch would take all responsibility for Ceausescu's security for the time of the state visit, the Minister of State, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, told the Romanian Ambassador, Pretor Popa. According to British law, the officers who were in charge with the President's security should leave all the armaments in the plane or hand them the British police officers at the airport. The British regulations were strict and no exception had been made so far, Lord Goronwy-Roberts added.¹¹ The Romanians also requested that the Bishop of London or the Bishop of Southwark be invited instead of the Archbishop of Canterbury since these two were believed to be more favourable to the Romanian regime than the later. The same applied to Conservative leaders such as W. Whitelaw, the vice-chief of the Conservatives or Lord Carrington, the chief of the Conservative opposition in the House of Lords preferred against Margaret Thatcher, a notorious anti-communist.¹² Eventually J. Thorpe was invited instead of Thatcher. Whether she knew or not about the Romanians' objections concerning her, Thatcher declared that when it came to the State Visit there were no divergences between the Conservatives and Labour. The Conservative Government was, however, the one that had

⁹ Nicholas Carroll, "Ceausescu makes it to the palace at last," *Sunday Times*, 11 June 1978.

¹⁰ Violeta Nastasescu, *Elena Ceausescu. Confesiuni fara frontiere [Elena Ceausescu. Confessions without frontiers]*, Bucharest, Editura Niculescu, 2010, p. 264.

¹¹ Telegram 050.194, Pretor Popa, the Ambassador of Romania, London, to Vasile Gliga, 12 June 1978 reporting on his meeting with Lord Goronwy-Roberts. RDA, Problema 220/A/1978 Anglia, vol. IV, Dossier 118, Preparation of the State Visit, f. 87.

¹² Telegram 050.139/31 May 1978, Pretor Popa, Romania's Ambassador to Vasile Pungan, Minister at the Presidency. RDA, Problema 220/A/1978 Anglia, vol. IV, Dossier 118, Preparation of the State Visit, ff. 1-2.

proposed that Ceausescu be invited to Britain. Julian Amery, as indicated, had conveyed the invitation in 1973 during his visit to Romania.¹³

Ceausescu also proved difficult and demanding, as might have been foreseen. He was insistent he and his wife enjoy the highest honours while in British as were accorded to only certain other, particularly favoured leaders. To the Ceausescus' great disappointment, the presidential plane was allowed to land not at Heathrow but at Gatwick airport. This had the disadvantage of being forty kilometres away from London. To make it more acceptable to the Romanians the British suggested that the guests be met by the Royal family at Victoria Station where the Ceausescus were supposed to come by train from Gatwick. The only residence acceptable for the three days of the visit was Buckingham Palace. Ceausescu expected to be transported there in an open carriage, accompanied by his hosts.¹⁴

Further details were gradually hammered out. The program of the visit included a ceremony during which Ceausescu was to be awarded by the Queen Elizabeth II the Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath. The President's wife, Elena Ceausescu, was to be granted a diploma for her research in Chemistry. Formerly in the background, Ceausescu's wife had started performing the role of 'first lady' to the full. Having been made a full member of the Central Committee in July 1972, she was prominent in internal affairs and was assessed to have a great deal of influence.¹⁵ She was, therefore, to be obliged. 'Many Romanians think that she played a major part (too major) in policy making', Jeffrey Petersen, the British Ambassador reported to London. For her increasing pretensions to the honours of a Head of State's consort and for her

¹³ RDA, Problema 220/A/1978, Anglia-RSR, Dossier 121, vol. VII, f. 27.

¹⁴ Violeta Nastasescu, *Elena Ceausescu. Confesiuni fara frontiere*[*Elena Ceausescu. Confessions without frontiers*], Bucharest, 2010, pp. 265-7.

¹⁵ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Jeffrey Petersen, British Embassy, Bucharest, to Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 13 January 1977, Valedictory from Bucharest.

‘drab, grim public appearances, she is not popular and, perhaps, more significantly, has become the butt of many popular jokes’.¹⁶

The couple’s demands had developed over time, reaching the level of conceding ‘nothing to royalty in their personal exigencies.’ Their assumed isolation was just a reflection of the socialist society which, while presumably offering equal share of opportunities for everyone, was clearly stratified in offering privileges. During the visit of King Baudouin of Belgium to Romania, the King insisted on giving the token return hospitality of a glass of champagne. Ceausescu made it clear that those invited must be confined strictly to the royal party, himself and senior member of the Government. ‘All suggestions that the doors of the reception should be thrown open to a slightly wider selection of prominent Romanians were firmly turned down. Neither the President nor his wife at any time felt it necessary to engage in conversation with any members of the royal party except the King and Queen and when necessary the accompanying Belgian Minister.’¹⁷

Ceausescu’s presidential style on visits abroad had developed progressively. Already in 1970, however, he expected to be received with the ceremony typically associated with royalty. During his state visit to Austria between 21 and 25 Sept 1970, for example, Ceausescu requested to be lodged at the castle of Klesheim, in Salzburg. The request was made, the Austrian believed, simply because he learnt that The Queen Elizabeth II had stayed there the year before. Apparently, Ceausescu wished to follow, as closely as possible, the pattern set by The Queen’s visit.¹⁸ In time the Ceausescus got the

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Jeffrey Petersen, Bucharest, to Anthony Crosland, MP, 13 January 1977, Valedictory from Bucharest.

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, Jeffrey Petersen, Bucharest, to Anthony Crosland, MP, 13 January 1977, Valedictory from Bucharest. Consultation with other royal households having experience of the Ceausescus (most recently those of Netherlands and Belgium as well as the Duchy of Luxembourg).

¹⁸ In return for a visit paid by the President Jonas to Romania in Sept 1969, Ceausescu, accompanied by his wife, his first son, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Foreign Trade, went to Austria. The officials concerned with security got on the nerves of their Austrian opposite numbers. ‘Despite the irritation caused in the official world by Ceausescu’s insistence upon being treated, literally, as

reputation as the world's most capricious and difficult guests.¹⁹ To go to Britain as the Queen's guest was a matter of political importance and personal prestige for Ceausescu.

If Ceausescu's motives in pressing for the visit were prestige and pride, Britain continued to be motivated primarily by economic considerations. It would be, London indicated, the first visit of the leader of a Socialist State, and a powerful recognition of Ceausescu's contribution to the promotion of a new politics of cooperation between all world states. The framework created by the visit could have economic results that would give the visit the character of working trip. The Labour Party would do what it could to ensure that the visit was a success, Ian Mikardo, the President of the International committee of the Labour Party, assured.²⁰

The Romanian Government, as might have been expected given its love for formal paperwork, insisted that a Joint Declaration be signed during the visit. The British Ambassador to Bucharest, Seconde, was instructed to underline the difference between a state visit to Britain and those to other Western countries such as the United States where the Head of State is also the Head of Government. Seconde had to convince the adamant Romanians that it was a long established practice in Britain that the State visits were 'not appropriate occasion for the issue of a solemn declaration of the kind which the

Royalty, the fairly unfortunate effect which his son seems to have had on those who met him and some ruffled feelings in the corps diplomatique over the manner in which they were treated at Ceausescu's own reception, the visit received uniformly favourable, if somewhat meagre, press coverage.' There were flattering articles about Romania's independent ways and the opportunities offered to the Western businessmen and tourists.

'Partly perhaps because of the change of government in Austria since President Jonas visited Romania, there appears to have been almost complete agreement between the two sides on the various topics discussed during the two sessions of official talks. [...] The Socialist government here have gone rather further than their predecessors in welcoming this project. He seems to have made a similar impression there as he did in Belgium last October. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/2316, f. 2, E.H.B. Gibbs, British Embassy Vienna, to J.K. Drinkall, Western European Department, FCO, 8 October 1970; FCO 28/2316, f. 4. J.F. Podolier, East European Section, Research Department, to A. F. Green, EESD, FCO, 25 January 1973.

¹⁹ A report of Ceausescu's visit to Portugal about a year before mentioned that he pulled all the telephone wires out of the walls and insisted that his food must be tasted by more than one person before he would sample it. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3084, f. 7, B.G. Cartledge to Reginald Seconde, 9 February 1977.

²⁰ RDA, Problema 220/1978, Anglia-RSR, vol. I, f. 82, Telegram no. 050.134 sent by Pretor Popa to Vasile Gliga, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 October 1977.

Romanian authorities have in mind'. If an actual diplomatic instrument could not be arranged, the British government did agree to make an exceptional concession to satisfy Romanian requirements: the talks between Ceausescu and the British Prime Minister would lead to the issue of a Joint Communiqué, which would be referred to by both as a 'Joint Statement'.²¹ The Romanians were satisfied with this solution, but desired that the 'Joint Statement' should be something of substance. It should be regarded, thereafter, as the authoritative basis for the development of bilateral relations.²²

It was expected that Ceausescu's visit to London finally scheduled for 13 to 16 June 1978 would open up new prospects for economic, political and cultural relations.²³ It was also likely that the visit would be marked by protests since Ceausescu's regime was one of the least democratic in Eastern Europe.²⁴ Ceausescu had been upset by protests over the alleged unfair treatment of Hungarians during his previous visit to Washington; but also because of the great popular concern in the West concerning human rights abuses. In the run up to the visit, Ceausescu's repressive domestic policies were mentioned and publicized far less than his nationalistic foreign policy. Before visiting Britain, Ceausescu granted an interview to *The Sunday Telegraph*.²⁵ He denied that Romania had encountered problems arising from rapid industrialization. He seemed to have forgotten entirely the Jiu Valley miners' strike which had occurred one year before his visit in August 1977. About 35,000 miners participated in the strike, blocking the

²¹ Aide-mémoire, 19 May 1978. RDA, Problema 220/A, Dossier 117, vol. 3, Preparation of the state visit, 1-31 Mai 1978, ff.178-179.

²² RDA, Problema 220/A. Mapa 1978/115-117, Dossier 117, vol. 3, Preparation of the state visit, 1-31 Mai 1978, ff.175 -177.

²³ The economic aspects of the visit consisted of a license to the Romanian government to manufacture 80 aircrafts and 225 Rolls-Royce engines. Referring to the agreement, the Queen mentioned the 'excellent cooperation' between Britain and Romania, particularly in the field of aviation. David Spanier, "Traditional start for first state visit by a communist leader". *The Times*, 14 June, 1978, p. 7.

²⁴ Nicholas Carroll, "Ceausescu makes it to the palace at last," *Sunday Times*, 11 June 1978.

²⁵ "Romania fears London demos," *Sunday Telegraph*, 11 June 1978.

entrances to mines and occupying the mining operations offices for a week.²⁶ A combination of local grievances and the promulgation of new pension laws sparked off a work stoppage in at least two mining towns in Jiu Valley area. The miners demanded a reduction in the working day from eight to six hours, retirement at age of fifty and concessions on other issues workplace issues. Ceausescu interrupted his Black Sea holiday and hastily convened a government commission to deal with the crisis. He travelled to the Jiu Valley. According to the unofficial reports, the President had first a meeting, unaccompanied by advisers with the strike committee, which had presented him with a list of demands. One of these was that none of the strike leaders should be subsequently punished. Others were said to include shorter working hours, a change in the new pension law, better food and medical facilities, and safer and modern equipment.²⁷ Ceausescu is said to have agreed to the demands, promising pension reforms and improvement of working conditions. In spite of Ceausescu's promises to meet the grievances and not to take retaliatory measures against the organizers of the strike, the Jiu Valley was declared a 'restricted area', and the army together with security police began a crackdown. In the following months, several hundred miners were moved to other mining areas while others were sent to a labour camp on the Danube-Black Sea canal.²⁸

²⁶ Some accounts mentioned that two shifts went going down the mines and refused to come up and, after local authorities had failed to sort the matter out, Ilie Verdet, the senior party secretary, is said to have gone to the area. A number of reports suggest that the miners, who were represented by a strike committee, refused to accept the intermediary role of Verdet and proceeded to hold him hostage – we understand in the house of one of the miners – until the President himself came to hear their grievances. TNA, PRO, FCO 28/3072, f. 48, British Embassy Bucharest to E.G. Lambert, EESD, FCO, 25 October 1977, Trouble at the mine; FCO 28/3073, Internal Situation in Romania, f. 52. K. B. A. Scott, Eastern European & Soviet Department, to Sutherland, 30 November 1977.

²⁷ British Embassy Bucharest to E.G. Lambert, EESD, TNA, PRO, FCO, 25 October 1977, Trouble at the mine. FCO 28/3072, f. 48.

²⁸ The strike was not reported by the Romanian media. The first eye-witness account came from an interview given by Istvan Hoszu, a miner from the Jiu Valley who left Romania in 1986. Nelson, *Romanian Politics in the Ceausescu Era*, p.187 and Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, pp. 184-185.

Other evidence suggests that the British public generally was aware that Ceausescu was far less benign than sometimes portrayed in the press. Letters addressed by many British people to their MPs, for example, expressed concern for human rights violation in Romania. One of the issues raised was the psychiatric abuse to which political prisoners were subjected and their maltreatment in detention. Amnesty International was in possession of papers indicating that the Romanian authorities applied psychiatric treatment to subjects found guilty only of having exercised their rights to freedom of expression and conscience.²⁹ The case of Ion Vulcanescu who succeeded in leaving Romania a year before the state visit was typical of the experience of the thirty Romanian victims of psychiatric abuse then known. Between April and May 1975 Vulcanescu was interrogated for between four and sixteen hours daily. The interrogation usually took place during the night or early morning. He was not allowed food or drink while being interrogated and he was severely beaten after refusing to sign a document saying he had committed crimes. The document did not specify however which crimes he had committed.³⁰

On the evening of 11 May 1975 Vulcanescu was sent to the prison hospital of Jilava, south west of Bucharest, after he had suffered severe head injuries caused by kicking. He was held in the psychiatric ward of the hospital until 3 June. This ward was at this time occupied by both political and common offenders who were subjected to treatment with various drugs. . . . Vulcanescu was irregularly injected with doses of Plegomazin and Mezoptil – up to 400 milligrams being administered daily by Dr. Serbanescu and Mr. Velicu. Some of the political offenders who had been tried already were treated with intramuscular injections of up to 800 milligrams of Plegomazin and Mezoptil per day. Plegomazin is a strong sedative generally invoking a state of apathy in a patient and slowing down both physical and mental reaction. Mezoptil has a similar effect.’³¹

Another case mentioned by Amnesty International was that of Mihail, one of signatories of the Human Rights Appeal initiated by the writer Paul Goma. Mihail was

²⁹ Simpson asked Dell to express to Ceausescu’s the concern that existed in Britain about Human Rights Violation in Romania. TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, Amnesty International, Director David Simpson, to the Secretary of State for Trade, Edmund Dell, 12 June 1978 on Human Rights Violation in Romania.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

interrogated, beaten and force to drink methyl alcohol while he was in the hands of the Securitate. These cases were mentioned as evidence that the regime continued to sent to prison people whose only guilt was that they criticized the regime. Dr. Nicolae Ighisan, Lae Iorgulescu and Janos Torok were also indicated as suffering political repression.³² Writing on behalf of the people of Romania, Radu Campeanu, a Romanian exile, voiced strong opposition to the welcome to be given to Ceausescu. His reception would be a blow to freedom and an encouragement to totalitarian oppression. He referred to the brutalities inflicted on Romanians, and in particular to the extermination of the political and intellectual elite.³³

MPs wrote to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, enclosing letters from their constituents. Most correspondents were concerned with human rights violations in Romania and were asking for the invitation to be cancelled. Since the question of personal freedom in Romania raised so much concern among the British and formed the subject of the many letters, the officials felt the need to point out that the British Government had taken 'suitable opportunities, most recently during the visit to Britain of the Romanian Foreign Minister in mid-November, to spell out to the Romanian authorities their attitude on matters of individual liberty. In their replies, the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs did not forget to mention that 'like all other signatories of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Romania is committed to respect the freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.'³⁴

³² David Simpson, Amnesty International, to the Secretary of State for Trade, Edmund Dell, 12 June 1978 on Human Rights Violation in Romania. TNA, PRO, BW 53/23.

³³ Letter of Radu Campeanu, Conseil National Roumain, Paris, 21 June 1978. TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 46..

³⁴ Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to Eric Deakins, MP, House of Commons, 15 June 1978. TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 34.

Notwithstanding the criticism, the British Government remained inclined to see the visit happen, and to make it a success. The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, maintained that,

‘governments of both parties have taken the view that contacts and exchanges of visits with Romania, and with other countries of Eastern Europe, are important in pursuing detente, in seeking to widen the area of cooperation, and in creating an atmosphere in which trade can flourish and bilateral problems be discussed and solved.’³⁵

One aspect of particular concern remained a number of personal cases in which Romanian citizens wished to marry British nationals or to leave Romania to join relatives in this country. According to the British the cases had been discussed with the Romanians ‘with very good results’.³⁶ Nonetheless, when British officials were asked to intervene in specific cases such as the case of a persecuted Christian family for belonging to the Pentecostal faith, the standard answer prepared was addressed by the Foreign Office in response to complaints:³⁷ ‘We should have no real standing to intervene directly to the Romanian Government in a case of this kind. However, the general issue of personal freedom is likely to be covered during discussions between President Ceausescu and the Prime Minister.’³⁸ And although a meeting with the Romanian President was asked for by the Director of an organization ‘Christian support for the Persecuted’, it was not normal for a guest of The Queen to meet private groups

³⁵ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 34. Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to Eric Deakins, MP, House of Commons, 15 June 1978. Deakins wrote to David Owen on 5 June 1978 forwarding a letter from his constituent, Rev. J.B. Buckingham.

TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 38. Secretary of State, David Owen, FO, to Geoffrey Howe, MP, On religious freedom in Romania. Basa family- Helsinki agreement. BW 53/23, f. 16. David Owen to Sir Derek Walker-Smith, MP, 12 May 1978.

³⁶ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 34. Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to Eric Deakins, MP, House of Commons, 15 June 1978.

TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 38. Secretary of State, David Owen, FO, to Geoffrey Howe, MP, on religious freedom in Romania. Basa family- Helsinki agreement

³⁷ The case of Basa family was also presented by the British press. Bernard Levin, “President Ceausescu’s cynical gesture. Freedom for the Basa family but how many more are trapped?”, *The Times*, 16 June 1978

³⁸ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 31. Sir Geoffrey Howe, MP, wrote to the Secretary of State on 5 June, forwarding a letter from his constituent P.J. Walker, about the victimisation of a Christian family in Romania. C.C.R. Battiscombe, EESD, to the Private Secretary of Lord Goronwy-Roberts, 9 June 1978.

‘unless he specifically asks to do so and a convenient time can be found in the programme. As it is President Ceausescu’s programme had been fixed for some time, and it is very full.’³⁹ The British government continually emphasized that:

An invitation to pay a State Visit does not, of course, imply approval of particular policies pursued by the Government of the visitor’s country. But it does suggest the existence of shared interests, to which a State Visit would give impetus. Relations between Britain and Romania have become substantial, especially in trade, but also in the political and other fields. In the Government’s view, there is good scope for strengthening and broadening those ties. President Ceausescu’s State Visit will be an important contribution to this.⁴⁰

The MPs were assured that the Prime Minister and other Ministers would during their discussions with Ceausescu the way in which the provisions of the Final Act have been implemented.’⁴¹

On the other hand, and oddly, a large proportion of the letters pouring into Britain arrived from Italy. Many of these were highly supportive of the visit. Managers and owners of various companies which had business interests or affairs in Romania expressed delight at the news concerning Ceausescu’s visit to London and did not forget to emphasize the ‘improvement of living standard in Romania’ or the ‘harmonious development’ of the country in which the people had every opportunity to enjoy their own languages.⁴² Why did all these Italians felt such a need to write to the British Prime Minister and inform him on the internal affairs of Romania? It seems probable that the Ceausescu regime had solicited the letters from its business partners in order to counter the anticipated avalanche of criticism.

³⁹ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 30. D.G. Lambert, EESD, to the Director of an organization ‘Christian support for the Persecuted’, 7 June 1978.

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 34, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to Eric Deakins, MP, House of Commons, 15 June 1978.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, ff. 40-45. ‘The various people enjoy the fullest rights guaranteed by Romanian law.’ BW 53/23, f. 44, 9 June 1978. The president of a company importing foodstuffs from Romania, wrote on 10 June 1978 a letter to PM James Callaghan in which he mentioned that he had learnt with pleasure about Ceausescu’s visit and stressed the rise of living standards in Romania. TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 45.

In anticipation of Ceausescu's visit to London, the Romanian press began to demonstrate a greater interest in British affairs, and with it, a more friendly editorial line. Britain was seeking, 'with realism, calm and lucidity', ways of overcoming the economic and social difficulties it had to face. The weekly *Lumea* pointed out that Britain had a solid tradition of efficiency in industrial, economic and commercial activities and that its people were highly competent, talented and earnest. Numerous statements by British political figures on the expansion and consolidation of relations between Romania and Britain were published including citations from statements by Lord Goronwy-Roberts, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and Denis Hurd, the Conservative spokesman on international affairs.⁴³

The British press, likewise, began to demonstrate greater interest. A collection of Ceausescu's speeches and declaration, entitled 'Nicolae Ceausescu – An Effort to create a Modern Romania' was published in Britain under the supervision of Stan Newens, MP.⁴⁴ On 1 June 1978 Ceausescu gave an interview to Keith Hatfield of the Independent Television News.⁴⁵ In anticipation of the interview, the Romanians had vetted questions, and indicated what might be asked. The result was a disappointment. Hatfield was frustrated by the 'very standard answers' he had obtained to some 'very standard questions'. There was no prospect of ITN using all of the interview although Hatfield hoped to use a significant portion by spreading extracts around the various short items planned for News at Ten before and during the visit. Hatfield had to steer a difficult path between proper criticism and an appreciation of what was positive in Romania; between the President's authoritarian government and the bureaucracy, inefficiency and corruption

⁴³ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, EE/5838/A1/1, 14 June 1978, International Affairs, I. General and Western Affairs. Reports in anticipation of Ceausescu's visit to London. Extensive coverage by the Romanian press of British political and economic life was reported by Agerpress.

⁴⁴ The volume was published by Russell Press of Nottingham. TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, EE/5838/A1/1, 14 June 1978, International Affairs, I. General and Western Affairs.

⁴⁵ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, EE/5838/A1/1, 14 June 1978, International Affairs, I. General and Western Affairs.

of the system in general, and Romania's foreign policy, her economic achievements and her treatment of minorities.⁴⁶

During his visit to London, Ceausescu was protected from disturbances which might have been caused by a projected meeting of the Romanian exiles in Britain. Their aim was to signal the repressive nature of the Romanian communism.⁴⁷ 'A small group of protesters were carrying a placard reading 'Human rights for Romanian Christians!'.⁴⁸ The protesters were members of the British-Romanian association, an émigré group whose demonstration, although authorized by the police, was obstructed. They were completely obscured from Ceausescu's view by a police bus parked right in front of them.'⁴⁹ One of the protesters, carrying a placard comparing life in Romania to Orwell's '1984' was arrested for attempting to scale a police barrier. Ion Ratiu, the chairman of the British-Romanian association, claimed that there was a deliberate action by the police to block the demonstration.⁵⁰ Ratiu also claimed to have had difficulty in getting letters critical of British foreign policy towards Romania into the British press.

If the Government was, indeed, trying to censor Ratiu, it was not entirely successful. In a letter addressed to *The Times*, Ratiu revealed the shortcomings of the regime, pointing out that 'there was no evidence that denial of human rights and break-neck forced industrialization are the price Ceausescu must pay to maintain the country's

⁴⁶ TNA, PRO, BW 53/23, f. 27. ENR 026/S. M.W. Shaw, British Embassy Bucharest, to D.G. Lambert, 6 June 1978. State visit: Coverage by ITN.

⁴⁷ Amongst the people that were watching the procession there were certain hostile groups that carried placards. During Ceausescu's visit to Westminster Abbey, placards containing anti-Communist messages were also seen. Violeta Nastasescu, *Elena Ceausescu. Confesiuni fara frontiere*, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 270-1 and 286.

⁴⁸ David Spanier, "Traditional start for first state visit by a communist leader", *The Times*, 14 June, 1978, p. 7.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, June 16, 1978.

⁵⁰ *The Guardian* reported a similar incident on 13 June in which a London bus was driven in front of a group of Hungarian demonstrators. Mark Percival, "Britain's 'Political Romance' with Romania in the 1970s", *Contemporary European History*, 4, I (1994), p. 84.

independence'.⁵¹ 'Little practical purpose is served by arguing whether or not Romania's foreign policy involved genuine defiance of the Soviet Union as was asserted in *The Times*'. The British should be aware that Ceausescu 'relied heavily on nationalistic appeal and professed a communist ideological purity which he constantly extolled to the party and country'.⁵² Ratiu expressed the hope that Britain would exert a beneficial influence over Romania especially concerning human rights.⁵³

Concerned with the human rights abuses that took place in Romania, Lord Chelwood, a Conservative, asked in the House of Lords,⁵⁴

Which promises in the field of human rights -- according to the 1947 Peace Treaty and to the Helsinki Final Act signed by Romania -- had President Ceausescu undertaken to carry out in return for the large increases proposed in the provision of British technology?⁵⁵

The Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, avoided being explicit regarding the issue of human rights. He merely stated that negotiations with Romania were based 'on normal commercial considerations'. He expressed his strong belief that Britain and Romania 'will, indeed, derive very considerable economic and, it may be, political advantage' from the agreement concluded.⁵⁶ The economic potential of the visit was very important from both British and Romanian points of view. In the Romanian view, the visit would establish the fact that the Romanian economy was growing rapidly, and now required greater cooperation

⁵¹ *The Times*, July 22, 1978, *The Times*, September 20, 1978.

⁵² Ratiu revealed the shortcomings of the regime, pointing out that 'there was no evidence that denial of human rights and break-neck forced industrialization are the price Ceausescu must pay to maintain country's independence'. *The Times*, July 22, 1978, *The Times*, September 20, 1978.

⁵³ In a letter to *The Times*, he stated that 'there is no evidence that denial of human rights and break-neck forced industrialization are the price Ceausescu must pay to maintain country's independence' hoping that Great Britain could influence Romania in this respect. *The Times*, July 22, 1978.

⁵⁴ Sir Beamish Tufton (1917-1989) was elected Conservative Member of Parliament for Lewes in 1945. In 1974 he became a Life Peer as Lord Chelwood of Lewes. Lord Chelwood wanted also to know 'whether they will give any assurance that the latter is consistent in every respect with our COCOM obligations.' COCOM (the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls) was established in 1947 to put an embargo on Western exports to East Bloc countries.

⁵⁵ Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Fifth series, volume CCCXCIV, Session 1977-1978, 28 June, 1978, British Technological Aid.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

‘with economically developed countries on the basis of the latest gains of contemporary science and technology.’⁵⁷

The more economic ties Ceausescu had with the West, the stronger his political independence from the Soviet Union would become, the British government seemingly believed. Human rights, it seemed could wait and would improve provided other agendas were furthered.

Since Helsinki East-West relations had tended to slide down-hill, according to the Prime Minister James Callaghan. During the plenary session of talks, which took place at No.10 Downing Street on 14 June, in the presence of British and Romanian high officials, Callaghan approached the international situation and disarmament and reviewed the state of East-West relations and *détente*. The talks held in the Cabinet room lasted for about an hour. Besides the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, David Owen, the Secretary of State for Trade, Edmund Dell, and the Minister of State, from the Department of Industry, Gerald Kaufman, were also taking part. From the Romanian side besides Ceausescu, his First Deputy Prime Minister, Gheorghe Oprea, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stefan Andrei, the Minister for Machine Building Industry, Ioan Avram and the Minister for Presidential Affairs, Vasile Pungan took part in the meeting. The discussion centred largely on international political matters: East-West relations, detente, disarmament and developments in Southern Africa.⁵⁸ Callaghan mentioned three negative factors which led to the regression of *détente*: Soviet expenditure on arms which grew very fast;⁵⁹ the balance in Africa being disturbed by the

⁵⁷ Communiqué of the Meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in *State visit of President Nicolae Ceausescu to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, June 13-16, 1978*, Media Publishing House, 1979, pp. 14-19.

⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838, Press Office Bulletin, 14 June 1978. State visit of President Ceausescu. Plenary Talks, 10 Downing Street.

⁵⁹ Soviet expenditure on arms grew very fast – that was the British genuine conclusion, not propaganda, the Prime Minister stressed out. The Russians might argue that they needed to strengthen their defences on border with China. The West had to take account not simply of Soviet intentions but of Soviet

Soviet Union; and human rights which had been brought to the fore by the Helsinki Agreement. 'Like the United States, the UK had a large Jewish community; the fate of their coreligionists naturally concerned them and this concern had spread into the more general field of the circumstances of intellectuals and the trials which had taken place for, in Western terms, no adequate reasons', the Prime Minister maintained.⁶⁰ This was apparently the only time Callaghan mentioned the issue of human rights during Ceausescu's state visit. More important considerations were to be tackled.

According to Ceausescu, East-West tensions resulted from the realization of both Blocs that their influence over the rest of the world was diminishing. 'The development of countries outside the two world blocs would inevitably determine the world balance of forces. This was a trend which would become even stronger. Romania regarded these changes as a favourable development which would help to bring about new policies based on the independence and equality of rights of each nation. The new trends in international relations were being accentuated by the economic crisis, by the energy crisis – including the crisis in oil supply – and by the monetary and financial crisis in the Western world. While the Great Powers were seeking to maintain their spheres of influence and to win new ones, the redistribution of spheres of influence was bound to lead to further sharpening of international relations.'⁶¹

Ceausescu also emphasized that in the period following Helsinki certain Western countries seemed to have lost sight of the essentials of East-West cooperation. This is why probably he insisted during the following *tête-à-tête* conversation with Callaghan on Britain's greater involvement in Eastern Europe. 'The Socialist countries were not

capabilities. TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838, Record of the Prime Minister's discussion, in plenary session, with President Ceausescu of Romania at 10, Downing Street on 14 June 1978 at 15.00.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

exempt from blame either,' Ceausescu assessed. 'They could have done more.' What it was certain was that the existing tensions would increasingly limit existing contacts.⁶²

The plenary session of talks followed a *tête-à-tête* conversation which the Prime Minister had with Ceausescu earlier that day. A further *tête-à-tête* discussion took place in the President's suite at Buckingham Palace on 15 June.⁶³ During their first *tête-à-tête* conversation on 14 June, Callaghan asked Ceausescu on his opinion on whether the apparent deterioration in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States was real or not. Ceausescu was inclined to doubt that the tension would substantially affect the common concern of both governments to reach agreements in a number of areas. His conclusion was that the relations between the two superpowers were unlikely to head towards real deterioration. The major problems in international affairs could no longer be solved by the United States and the Soviet Union alone, Ceausescu added.⁶⁴

The second *tête-à-tête* meeting held at Buckingham Palace on 15 June focused at first on relations between China and the Soviet Union. Callaghan was interested in Ceausescu's views on the best ways of regulating one's relations with the Soviet Union and China.⁶⁵ The British Prime Minister found it difficult 'to be punched by one and buffeted by the other into taking up particular positions'. Callaghan referred to this matter particularly in the light of Ceausescu's recent visit to Peking.⁶⁶

Romania enjoyed good relations with both China and the Soviet Union and was careful not to interfere in Sino-Soviet polemics when these flared up from time to time, Ceausescu assessed. He noticed that the Soviets were 'a bit more suspicious than China

⁶² TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838, Record of the Prime Minister's discussion, in plenary session, with President Ceausescu of Romania at 10, Downing Street on 14 June 1978 at 15.00.

⁶³ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. From the Private Secretary Brian Cartledge, to W.K. Prendergast, FCO, 16 June 1978, The Prime Minister's Discussions with President Ceausescu of Romania on 14 and 15 June 1978.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Record of Prime Minister's Conversation with President Ceausescu of Romania at Buckingham Palace on 15 June 1978, at 17.15.

of Romanian policies and did not always regard Romania's relation with China benevolently'. The Russians had in fact no reason to be angry with Romania, Ceausescu added.⁶⁷ Although he agreed with the Chinese principle that relations between countries should be based on mutual cooperation and Romania had a good relationship with China, this relation would not affect those with the Soviet Union or with any other country.⁶⁸

From his recent visit to Peking, Ceausescu derived the impression that the Chinese desired to accelerate economic development and were aware that they needed to cooperate with others. There was some prospect for the improvement of Sino-Soviet relations such as for the China's relations with the United States, provided that the Americans gave up their position regarding Taiwan.⁶⁹ The Chinese were clearly more willing to be active in the international arena. This was also clear from their performance at the United Nations, Ceausescu asserted.⁷⁰

Callaghan then tackled what was evidently his main interest: defence sales to China. The Chinese had given to the British a clear hint that they would like to purchase the Harrier vertical takeoff (VTO) aircraft for deployment on their border. Supplying aircraft to China could however create problems in Britain's relations with the Soviet Union. In turn, if Britain did not respond to the Chinese request, they would feel rebuffed. Implicitly, Callaghan asked for an advice from Ceausescu.⁷¹ Britain should be able to supply Harriers to the Chinese in the same way as the Rolls Royce Spey engines had been

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Record of Prime Minister's Conversation with President Ceausescu of Romania at Buckingham Palace on 15 June 1978, at 17.15.

⁶⁸ The Prime Minister's Discussions with President Ceausescu of Romania on 14 and 15 June 1978. TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Brian Cartledge, Private Secretary, to W.K. Prendergast. TNA, PRO, FCO, 16 June 1978.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Record of Prime Minister's Conversation with President Ceausescu of Romania at Buckingham Palace on 15 June 1978, at 17.15.

⁷¹ Ibid.

supplied, 'without too much publicity', Ceausescu replied.⁷² '[I]n these matters, the less talk, the better – the Chinese are quite competent at keeping secrets.' Ceausescu added that, if necessary, the matter could be discussed further between Romania and Britain through other channels. In the meantime, he saw no reason why Britain should not go ahead, especially since if the Chinese were to acquire the Harrier, Romania 'could also get her hands on it more easily!' He said that smiling, intriguing Callaghan.⁷³ Was Romania interested in acquiring Harrier? Not yet, replied Ceausescu. He recalled his agreement with General de Gaulle made in 1968 for the purchase of French Mirage aircraft. Besides, his first priority was to implement the programme which he had already agreed with the British aircraft industry. Romania was manufacturing a military aircraft of their own which was in the initial stages of development, Ceausescu added.⁷⁴ Callaghan pointed out the qualities of the aircraft which would be valuable to the Chinese. Ceausescu assessed that he was sure that the Chinese wanted to buy it.

The situation in North Korea was also approached by the Prime Minister as well as Romania's relations with India. Close to the end of their conversation, Ceausescu insisted that Britain should develop its relations with 'the other Socialist countries of Eastern Europe to the extent to that they had done with Yugoslavia'. Britain's excellent relations with Yugoslavia had origins in their common experience during the Second World War, Callaghan mentioned. He reviewed Britain's relations with Hungary and Bulgaria which were 'correct, but rather lacked substance'. With Poland relations were 'closer, communications more natural and there was a significant higher level of trade'.

⁷² TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Brian Cartledge, Private Secretary, to W.K. Prendergast, FCO, 16 June 1978. The Prime Minister's Discussions with President Ceausescu of Romania on 14 and 15 June 1978.

⁷³ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Record of Prime Minister's Conversation with President Ceausescu of Romania at Buckingham Palace on 15 June 1978, at 17.15.

⁷⁴ The Prime Minister's Discussions with President Ceausescu of Romania on 14 and 15 June 1978. TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Brian Cartledge, Private Secretary, to W.K. Prendergast, FCO, 16 June 1978.

So far as Czechoslovakia was concerned, 'there was considerable political feeling' in Britain about it and he did not see the relations with this country improving as with the other Eastern European countries. Britain's relations with Romania would be deeper and more substantial than with some of the Socialist countries,' Callaghan pointed out.⁷⁵

For their part, Romanians were most willing to develop this relationship. Although daring, the targets established for Anglo-Romanian trade, were feasible, Ceausescu maintained.⁷⁶ Both Ceausescu and Callaghan reaffirmed their determination to work towards raising the annual volume of two-way trade by two and a half times compared with the level achieved in 1974, by 1980.⁷⁷ The evolution of trade and industrial cooperation was discussed in depth during the State Visit and the potential for further progress was taken into consideration.

The growth of trade and cooperation followed the signature of the Long Term Agreement on Economic Collaboration and Industrial and Technological Cooperation. GATT agreements and the position granted to Romania under the European Community's Generalised Scheme of Preferences also facilitated the access of Romanian goods to the markets of European Community.⁷⁸

The two governments signed memorandums on cooperation in the Aerospace Industry and technological cooperation in matters concerned with exploration for and production of offshore oil and gas.⁷⁹ Agreements were concluded between the Romanian Aeronautical Industry and British Aerospace [BAE] and Rolls-Royce on long term

⁷⁵ The Prime Minister's Discussions with President Ceausescu of Romania on 14 and 15 June 1978. TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Brian Cartledge, Private Secretary, to W.K. Prendergast, FCO, 16 June 1978.

⁷⁶ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Record of Prime Minister's Conversation with President Ceausescu of Romania at Buckingham Palace on 15 June 1978, at 17.15.

⁷⁷ An excerpt from the Communique of the Meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party was inserted in the book *Stat Visit of President Nicolae Ceausescu to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, June 13-16, 1978*, Media Publishing House, 1970, pp. 14-19.

⁷⁸ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Joint statement on the talks between Ceausescu and the Prime Minister James Callaghan held on 14 and 15 June 1978.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

cooperation in the manufacture of the BAC 1-11 aircraft, and of aircraft engines. The agreements with Rolls-Royce and BAE were signed at Filton on 15 June.⁸⁰ Rolls-Royce signed a framework agreement with Romania for sale of twenty five Spey engines and collaborative manufacture of 250 more over seventeen years.⁸¹ The framework agreement was valid until 30 September 1978.⁸² BAE signed Licensing Agreement and Technical Assistance Agreement. In addition BAE obtained an instruction to proceed and commitment to a substantial down payment.

The problem of COCOM restriction on transfer of technology arose in particular on aero engine castings and forgings. This was solved when Romanians acknowledged, only after considerable trouble, receipt of letter indicating that at the present time Rolls Royce could not guarantee transfer of technology for manufacture of all castings and forgings.⁸³

Documents had been also signed between the British groups Imperial Chemical Industries [ICI], Northern Engineering Industries, Shell International Petroleum Company, the National Coal Board and Romanian economic organizations. A record of understanding continuing for a further year the scientific and technological cooperation in agriculture and food processing was also signed during the State Visit.⁸⁴

The official statement, the Joint Statement, on the talks between Callaghan and Ceausescu reaffirmed the importance of the Joint Declaration signed by Ceausescu and

⁸⁰ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Record of Prime Minister's Conversation with President Ceausescu of Romania at Buckingham Palace on 15 June 1978, at 17.15. David Spanier, "Traditional Start for the First State Visit by a Communist Leader", *The Times*, 14 June 1978, p. 7; "Britain and Romania sign 200m pounds Plane Deal", *The Times*, 16 June 1978.

⁸¹ The Communiqué of the Meeting of the Executive Political Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party mentioned that licence was granted to the Romanian Government to manufacture eighty aircrafts and 225 Rolls-Royce engines. *Stat Visit of President Nicolae Ceausescu to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ,June 13-16, 1978*, Media Publishing House, 1970, pp. 14-19.

⁸² TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838, Telegram cipher cat A. Desk by 160800Z. To immediate Bucharest Tel. no 108 of 15 June 1978. For MAYS from OCTON. "Significant points on commercial front".

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Joint statement on the talks between Ceausescu and the Prime Minister James Callaghan held on 14 and 15 June 1978. TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838.

Harold Wilson in Bucharest on 18 September 1975. Callaghan and Ceausescu noted the development of British-Romanian relations and co-operation since that time and agreed that Ceausescu's State Visit represented a further stage in this process.⁸⁵ They agreed to continue to work for the intensification of their bilateral relations and cooperation in Europe, the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security, the settlement of current international problems and the construction of a better world. The Joint Statement underlined the importance of principles contained in the 1975 Declaration concerning the mutual relations between the two states for the promotion of friendship between the British and the Romanian peoples, and of international peace and cooperation.⁸⁶ Both sides expressed their concern over the fragility of the *détente* process and emphasized the need for further efforts to ensure that this process was continued until it becomes irreversible. Although they reaffirmed the importance of full implementation by all participating states of the provisions of the Final Act of the CSCE, there was no reference to human rights.⁸⁷

Ceausescu and Callaghan agreed that meetings at the highest level would continue to be a decisive factor in the development of bilateral relations.⁸⁸ Britain and Romania would also continue to extend and diversify their cultural exchanges as a means of promoting fuller knowledge of each of two peoples about the other. As well, an Agreement on cooperation in the field of education, science and culture was signed.⁸⁹

While Ceausescu's opinions were apparently much valued by the British officials, he and his wife succeeded in astounding the Buckingham Palace administration, their hosts during the State Visit. According to Violeta Nastasescu, Elena Ceausescu's

⁸⁵ TNA, PRO, PREM 16/1838. Joint statement on the talks between Ceausescu and the Prime Minister James Callaghan held on 14 and 15 June 1978.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

interpreter, the presidential couple behaved with unbelievably poor manners. The President's wife yelled orders from the office assigned to her, to show perhaps that she was actually in charge and powerful. She convened and released generals, Security officers, journalists and assistants, treating them all like they were her servants. They were running through the palace unsure of what she needed from them to accomplish her contradictory and illogical instructions. She addressed them insultingly. Even General Ion Mihai Pacepa, the chief of the Securitate responsible for the couple's safety, who, used to adopt an impassable attitude in tense circumstances, although unshaken, went from pale to red and grey as shock and shame set in.⁹⁰

Not to be outdone by his formidable wife, the President did not find a better way to spend time between various events than by strutting through the palace in 'Napoleonic' style. His Security officers rushed to convene ministers and councillors. Reaching the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei, one of those sent for him whispered breathlessly, 'The Comrade calls you, come quickly!' 'What is wrong with you people?' Andrei replied. 'Do you want me be seen running like you, the mockery of the palace personnel? Come to your senses!'⁹¹ Indeed, the Royal household looked on bewildered and tried to ignore the Ceausescu induced chaos.

Although she was accorded a high distinction, Elena Ceausescu's mood changed rapidly. The Romanians' request that the President's wife be conferred the title 'Fellow of the Royal institute of Chemistry' was granted. The ceremony was attended by Professor Mary Dorothy Hodgkin, Nobel Prize's laureate, Lord Walston, president of the Centre Britain- Eastern Europe and Sir William Harpham, director general of the Centre Britain-Eastern Europe.⁹²

⁹⁰ Violeta Nastasescu, *Elena Ceausescu. Confesiuni fara frontiere*, Bucharest, 2010, p. 271-2.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 272.

⁹² RDA, Problema 220/A/1978 Anglia, vol. IV, Dossier 118, f. 83. Preparation of the State Visit, Telegram London no 050.184/9 June 1978.

To emphasize the friendship between the two states, high Romanian and British distinction were awarded during the State Visit. The Queen Elizabeth II made Ceausescu a Knight of the Order of the Bath. In return, Ceausescu awarded Elizabeth II the high order of the Star of the Socialist Republic of Romania First Class.⁹³

Overall the visit represented a success for both the British and the Romanians, marking the culmination of bilateral relations. The lack of emphasis placed on human rights was probably a mistake, and very shortly after the end of the London meeting became an embarrassment, as news of how harsh Ceausescu was appeared in the headlines of Western papers.

⁹³ *State visit of President Nicolae Ceausescu to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, June 13-16, 1978*, Media Publishing House, 1979, p. 103.

Epilogue

A month after the State Visit an event shocked the Romanian leadership. The Deputy Director of the Romanian Intelligent Service and special advisor to Ceausescu, General Pacepa, defected to the United States in July 1978. He remained until the present time the highest-ranking defector from the former Eastern Bloc. Pacepa was apparently instructed to conduct assassinations of the Romanian exiles critical of Ceausescu regime. He refused and defected to the United States where he was granted political asylum. After his defection and until the end of the Communist regime in Romania, he was the target of several assassination attempts.⁹⁴

Among the targets of intimidations identified by Ceausescu had apparently been the Romanian and Hungarian émigrés in New York who had organized a demonstration on April 16, 1978. These included Cornel Dumitrescu, editor of the newspaper *Lumea libera* [*Free World*] edited in New York, in whose name the demonstration had been authorized, Viorel Trifa, leader of the Romanian Orthodox Bishopric in the United States, and Laszlo Kolman. Following the disclosures General Pacepa made immediately after his defection, the Securitate renounced the attempt to intimidate those mentioned above. The Securitate as well, commenced a smear campaign indicating that these émigrés were fascists and war criminals and that they were to blame for the murder of Jews during World War II.⁹⁵

Ion Ratiu, the person who organized the protest in London, was also included on the list of ‘undesirables’ to be silenced. Following the defection of General Pacepa and

⁹⁴ Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Orizonturi Rosii. Crimele, coruptia si mostenirea Ceausestilor. [Red Horizons. The True Story of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu's Crimes, Lifestyle, and Corruption]*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2010.

⁹⁵ Cristian Troncota, “About the Espionage Activity of the Romanian Communist Regime 1965-1989”, National Institute for the Study of totalitarianism, 1-2.2002, p. 224.

his disclosures the Securitate did not go beyond the stage of preparation. Ratiu and his family were however monitored by the Securitate, for being suspected of conducting ‘espionage for the benefit of the British secret services.’⁹⁶ At the beginning of 1989 Ratiu received a message through West-German sources that he was targeted by the Romanian regime and was offered protection.⁹⁷

In the 1980s international protests against Ceausescu’s domestic policies eroded much of the credibility that he gained through its defiance of Moscow. The “utility” of Romanian deviance seemed to be diminishing. Ceausescu’s efforts to silence all real or potential opposition within and outside the country had a profound impact on the perception of the Romanian Communist regime. One of the most known episodes involved two Romanian dissidents that lived in France. Virgil Tănase, a dissident Romanian writer and, at that time, French citizen, accused the Romanian government of mounting a plot to assassinate him and another émigré, Paul Goma, for campaigning for human rights in Romania.⁹⁸

Ceausescu’s ‘systematisation’ program which implied a disregard for Romanian architectural heritage led environmental groups in Western Europe to co-ordinate an international protest. The most effective in terms of attracting media attention and in providing moral support to Romanian people was the so-called “Operation Villages Roumains” that recommended to Western European villages to ‘adopt’ Romanian ones.

⁹⁶ Cristian Troncota, “About the Espionage Activity of the Romanian Communist Regime 1965-1989”, National Institute for the Study of totalitarianism, 1-2.2002, p. 224.

⁹⁷ Dennis Deletant, *Ceausescu si Securitatea. Constrangere si dizidenta in Romania anilor 1965-1989 [Ceausescu and the Securitate. Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989]*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1998. p. 304.

⁹⁸ “In Ceausescu’s orthodox Stalinist regime there is no room for criticism of his style of government”, *The Times* disclosed. He also mentioned the fate of the leaders of the strike at the Jiu Valley who died in road accidents. Gabriel Ronay, “Silence is Golden in Romania”, *The Times*, September 3, 1982, p. 5.

Consequently, tens of thousands of letters sent from European communities to Romania and addressed to the mayors of Romanian villages proposing the 'adoption'.

In 1989 the Prince of Wales criticized Ceausescu's village resettlement plan and demolition of churches. In a speech delivered at the opening of Business Design Centre on 27 April 1989, talking about architectural inheritance and building in harmony with surroundings, he mentioned the careless type of developer who is not concerned with the lives of villages or towns but just with profit. According to the Prince of Wales, the purpose of the systematization was to create a new type of person, utterly subordinate to Ceausescu's policy through the destruction of the cultural heritage of Romanians. He declared that was impossible to remain silent when "the peasant traditions and ancient of a fellow European society are bulldozed to make way for a uniform and deathly mock-modernity". The Prince of Wales declared that the British government and its European partners would bring pressure on the Romanian government 'to reverse its policies,' arguing that the "extraordinary cultural diversity of Romania is not only part of her natural wealth but a possession of inestimable value to all of humanity". Systematization eventually ceased as a result of Romanian revolution of 1989 that overthrew the Communist regime.⁹⁹

In December 1989, while the Romanian revolution taking place, the Queen, on the recommendation of Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, considered cancelling the honorary knighthood awarded to Ceausescu during his State Visit to Britain in 1978. A spokesman said the Queen will also return the personal award, the Star of the Socialist Republic of Romania First Class, given to her during that visit. The Foreign Affairs Minister, William Waldegrave told BBC TV that the British were seeking 'every further weapon we could find to encourage the Romanian people in their truly heroic resistance,

⁹⁹ The Speech was delivered at the opening of the Business Design Centre, at Islington, London, on 27 April, 1989.

and anything else we could do to damage Ceausescu.' Waldegrave admitted that when the honour was presented to the Romanian dictator it was thought his distancing from the Soviet Union may signal political reform within Romania and even himself believed it was a reasonable hope at that time.

Conclusion

Britain's relation with Romania evolved during the Cold War from cold and tense at the 1940s to warm and close in the second half of the 1970s. While at the end of the Second World War, Britain's sphere of interests focused on an area which excluded Romania, in 1978 Ceausescu went to London in a State Visit and was received with much honour. It was the first time that a leader of a Communist country had been the Queen Elizabeth's guest at Buckingham Palace.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, although Britain's representatives reported an increased Soviet interference in Romania's domestic affairs, London warned them not to provide any advice or encouragement for King Michael and the opposition leaders. After the November 1946 elections the Communists had a virtually free hand in Romania. Little was done to protest the incorporation of Romania behind the Iron Curtain. On 10 February 1947, Britain signed a Peace treaty with Romania. Article 2 of the treaty contained a formal affirmation of the inviolability of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with the Declaration on Liberated Europe promulgated at Yalta but there was little evidence that the Communists would observe their undertakings. While in Romania the situation was deteriorating, people being imprisoned for real or imaginary offenses, certain Labour MPs and Communists' fellow travellers invited to visit Romania expressed admiration for the communist regime.

Britain's relations with Romania virtually ceased after King Michael's forced abdication at the end of 1947. The new policy pursued by the Communist regime towards Britain was marked by accusations of espionage, demands for the recall of British diplomats and the closure of the Press Office. For more than a decade Romania was totally isolated from the West. Although nominally a sovereign country, it was in fact a

very Soviet satellite. Confined to Bucharest, British diplomats could hardly get any information on what was going on in the country. Significantly, the British Minister to Bucharest, Allan Dudley, tended to disbelieve the Western press reports on students' unrest taking place in October 1956 echoing the Hungarian Revolution. Sitting in Bucharest, he had no access to any source of information independent of the regime.

Peaceful co-existence proclaimed by Khrushchev from the rostrum of the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist party inspired a Romanian to approach certain British MPs with proposals for resuming trade and cultural exchanges. Although admitting that the Romanians had been less disagreeable in the past two years in their treatment of the British Legation at Bucharest, the failure of the Romanian government to settle the problem of the outstanding financial debt and the refusal to release former employees of the Legation and the British Council hindered any reestablishment of amicable relations.

Except for the short thaw in 1956, for the remainder of the decade, relations remained uncomfortably frigid. Although the Romanian regime changed its attitude towards Britain to some extent, no significant improvement was possible. While the practice of arresting employees of the British Legation and the demands for recall of British diplomats was discontinued, surveillance of diplomatic missions continued, accompanied by a virtual confinement of British representatives to Bucharest and a small perimeter surrounding the capital. Despite the openness they claimed, the Romanians did not agree to the British proposal for opening reading rooms in Bucharest since that would be an opportunity for the British to place their agents there. Instead, the Romanians argued for exchanges of scientists, writers, exhibitions and even exchanges between the two national Churches.

A compromise emerged in the early 1960s when the Foreign Office, brushing aside the British Council - according to which the imprisonment of their former

employees prohibited any direct cultural liaison with Romania - decided on the resumption of limited cultural relations with Romania. The Romanians responded by releasing, in stages, the political detainees. Although the process was slow, by the time most of detainees were released, cultural relations were established on solid ground.

A trade agreement was also signed in October 1960. Although financial claims represented an important issue in the re-establishment of relations, the fact that Romania had solved similar legacy debt problems with the United States, France, Switzerland and Austria, led the British to hope that they would also be able to solve the matter with the Romanians. The improvement of bilateral relations continued in the 1960s with a 1962 Cultural Exchange Programme. Britain's Legation was raised to level of Embassy in September 1963 and the newly appointed British Ambassador to Bucharest, J.D. Murray, reporting Bucharest's efforts to obtain independence from Moscow, advised London not to encourage anti-Romanian publicity.

The Romanians emphasized emphatically a new policy laid down in the Declaration of 22 April 1964. The Romanian leadership was cautious however not to precipitate a break with the Soviet Union which almost happened four years later, when the new leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, stunned the world with a speech in which he condemned the Soviet led invasion of Czechoslovakia. Romanian support for Czechoslovakia led to a serious worsening of relations with the Soviet Union to a point at which it seemed possible that Romania might have been invaded. Romania demonstrated once again that it was not subservient to the will of the Soviet Union, while indicating also that it had greatly come up in the world. All were aware, of course, that the Brezhnev doctrine might equally be applied to Ceausescu as to Alexander Dubcek. It was not unlikely that the Russians would have liked to see Ceausescu replaced by 'someone more pliant to their wishes'. Ceausescu showed however great skill in making out a reasoned

case for Romania's policies, calling for world peace, self-determination, non-interference, and friendship with all. His distinctive style of foreign policy had given Romania a special position in the international community and secured for him a reputation as a world statesman.

The Labour Party Manifesto of 1974 provided for the improvement of relations with the Eastern European countries up to the limit which the situation permitted in each case. An important factor in the Prime Minister's decision to visit Romania in 1975 was its independent foreign policy. Harold Wilson's visit to Romania was the first by a British Prime Minister to an Eastern European state other than the Soviet Union since the Second World War. The visit marked a new foreign policy departure for Britain. Wilson and Ceausescu signed a Long Term Cooperation Agreement, which was a ten-year agreement on economic, industrial, and technical cooperation. The two sides expected a growth in trade over the duration of the agreement of two and half times. An agreement on financial issues was also reached, and from the British perspective this was probably the most important results of the visit since the Romanian debt had remained a bone of contention between the two sides for thirty years.

The Romanians appreciated Britain as an influential voice in the development of world economic and financial arrangements. The Romanians were interested in British advanced technology especially as an important supplier of aircraft engines. If Britain had learned to view Romania primarily through a political and economic lens, Romania's agenda might have been more extensive, but the hope for stronger and beneficial economic ties remained strong.

Romania was the least enthusiastic and effective member of the Warsaw Pact. Unlike the other members of the Pact, in addition to its contacts with the West and idiosyncratic position concerning the Sino-Soviet split, it made considerable effort to

establish a special relationship with the non-aligned movement and maintain relations with both Israel and the Arab countries. Romania's friendly relations with Yugoslavia and China and the non-aligned movement were designed to bolster its position.

By this time Ceausescu was at the peak of his power. He had achieved a measure of success in three important respects: consolidating the independence of the state and the sovereignty of the Romanian Communist Party; reconciling his policies of developing contacts with the West and the Third World with the immediate requirements of alliance with the Soviet Union; and weathering the effects of the world economic recession. He had managed to do all of these things both while increasing his apparent domestic popularity, and without loosening the Party's stranglehold on national life. While he might have appeared relatively liberal to London, and the Western world generally, Ceausescu remained in fact a 'complete' dictator, but he was also shrewd in playing a very complicated game. By courting Romanian nationalism he secured a measure of popular support which enabled him to maintain himself and his regime in power without Russian assistance. The illiberal nature of the regime in turn served the purpose of showing the Soviet Union that he was not a Dubcek and helped to allay misgivings about his overtures to Russia's enemies.

By this juncture, Romania's relative independence was remarkable, and certainly unique in the Eastern Bloc. Ceausescu was still given wide credit internationally for having condemned the Soviet led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and for his continuing assertion of Romania's political independence. He had cordial relations with China, Yugoslavia and other 'renegades'. He cultivated warm relations with the West and the European Community. He took an irritatingly independent and non-conformist line at international Communist Party meetings.

Britain was increasingly intrigued by the possibility of 'exploiting Romania's independent attitude within the Eastern Bloc, although there was no chance of our persuading Ceausescu to 'stray widely and become a Tito.' It was in the West's and particularly Britain's interest to give encouragement to Romanian efforts to follow an independent path in foreign affairs, particularly in the context of detente, at the CSCE, in the UN and in the deliberations of the Warsaw Pact. The Foreign Office was interested in achieving the maximum benefit from information which Romania could provide on developments in the world communist movement, seemingly fracturing with some help from Bucharest. By diminishing its dependence on the Soviet Union and developing closer political, economic and commercial contacts with the West, Romania produced difficulties within the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact and provided opportunities for Britain and the West generally. Romania's contacts with the EEC, its distinctive stand at the CSCE and its independent role at the United Nations had been helpful to the West. While maintaining internally the strictest communist regime in Eastern Europe, Ceausescu achieved considerable success in pursuing an independent and flexible foreign policy.

During 1975 four British Ministers went to Romania and five Romanian Ministers visited Britain. The momentum of exchanges continued in 1976 with six Romanian Ministers going to Britain and three British Ministers visiting Romania. The tempo of working-level visits on subjects ranging from economics to ideology with the Soviet Union also increased dramatically. Although the Western leaders understood that there were limits within which the Romanians operated, the independent and nonconformist line seemed muted since Brezhnev's visit to Bucharest and the Warsaw Pact meeting in November 1976.

The deliberate policy of normalising relations with its Warsaw Pact allies created a period of relative calm for pursuing Romania's national interests. Quieter

policies and safe-guarding gains pursued in the second half of the 1970s had an explanation. The Romanian leaders were in no doubt that they were continuously under critical surveillance through Moscow's ideological telescope. They knew that they could not provoke the Russians too far. The necessity of keeping up Marxist-Leninist appearances was somehow imprinted on the collective mind by the events of 1956 and 1968. Keeping up on the ideological front internally was important.

In pursuit of foreign policy advantage, and export potentials, the cultural and human rights agendas were quietly shelved. The Romanian perspective on human rights was not encouraging. Romania's application of the Helsinki Final Act concerning free movement of people, ideas, and information, had been far from satisfactory. Britain could not exert any beneficial influence on human rights issue without damaging more important interests. Encouraging the Romanians to introduce a greater measure of individual freedom internally was important in as much as it could facilitate easier human contacts and allow British consular officials to deal promptly with bilateral cases concerning British nationals. Representations were frequently necessary to support applications for travel documents in favour of Romanians to visit or join relatives in Britain and concerning delays in allowing British and Romanian nationals to marry.

While the Romanian officials were in frantic search for new friends and associates in the Western world, official vigilance increased at home amounting almost to a freeze in foreign contacts concerning average people. In 1977 Ceausescu himself spoke angrily about the 'seduction' of citizens and the activities carried on in 'certain countries' to encourage the Romanian citizens to emigrate which he described as a grave interference in Romania's internal affairs, hostile acts against Romania. However he did allow a distinction between the issues of integrating families towards which he showed understanding as 'justified cases' and emigration of which he strongly disapproved.

Although the British saw in Romania excellent trade opportunities which they were determined to pursue, British exports to Romania in 1977 totalled only 80.6 million pounds (0.25% of the UK total). The British share of total Romanian imports was higher (2.72%). Although a member of the CMEA, by the latter 1970s, Romania conducted less than half of its trade with Communist countries. The Romanians attached great importance to expanding their relations with the West in order to obtain support and credibility for their independent policies.

Ceausescu's visit to Britain from 13 to 16 June 1978 was the first State Visit to Britain by a Communist Head of State. In part the invitation was intended to recognise the special position of Romania as a Communist country with an independent foreign policy and one which, by maintaining good relations with countries of all political persuasions, had a unique contribution to make to the solution of international problems. The Government's justification for inviting Ceausescu was that he alone in the Warsaw Pact bloc had consistently taken a foreign policy line independent of Moscow, and had therefore to be encouraged. The visit also encouraged closer commercial relations between the two countries and thereby increased the opportunities for British exporters in Romania. Notwithstanding the criticism, the British Government remained inclined to see the visit happen, and to make it a success.

Britain's relations with Romania would be deeper and more substantial than with some of the Socialist countries,' Callaghan pointed out during Ceausescu's visit to London. Both Ceausescu and Callaghan reaffirmed their determination to work towards raising the annual volume of two-way trade by two and a half times compared with the level achieved in 1974, by 1980. The growth of trade and cooperation followed the signature of the Long Term Agreement on Economic Collaboration and Industrial and Technological Cooperation.

In the 1980s, Ceausescu's infringement of human rights became notorious. He lost much of the credibility that he had previously gained through his defiance of Moscow. His efforts to silence all real or potential opposition within and outside the country had a profound impact on the perception of the Romanian communist regime. In London Ceausescu reached his apogee. Ten years later he was executed during the Revolution of December 1989 which put an end to the Communist regime in Romania.

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Appendix

Diplomatic relations' level:

1944-1946 representation in ACC [Allied Control Commission]

Political mission: 8 October 1947-1 August 1955

Legation between 1 August 1955 and 26 September 1963

Embassy since 26 September 1963.

Britain's Heads of Mission:

1947-1948 Adrian Holman

1949-1951 Walter Roberts

1951-1954 William Sullivan

1954-1956 Dermot MacDermot

1956-1959 Alan Dudley

1959-1961 David Scott Fox

1961-1963 Dalton Murray

1963-1965 Dalton Murray, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

1965-1967 Leslie Glass

1967-1968 Sir John Chadwick

1969-1971 Denis Laskey

1972-1975 Derrick Ashe

1975-1977 Jeffrey Petersen

1977-1979 Reginald Seconde

1980-1983 Paul Holmer

1983-1986 Philip McKearney

1986-1989 Hugh Arbuthnott

Romania's Heads of Mission:

1946-1947 Richard Franasovici

1947-1952 Nicolae Cioroiu

1953-1956 Pavel Babuci

1956-1957 Nicolae Korcinski

1957-1961 Petre Balaceanu

1961-1964 Alexandru Lazareanu

1964-1966 Alexandru Lazareanu, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

1966-1972 Vasile Pungan

1972-1980 Pretor Popa

1980-1986 Vasile Gliga

1986-1990 Stan Soare

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